

CANADA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM UNDER ATTACK

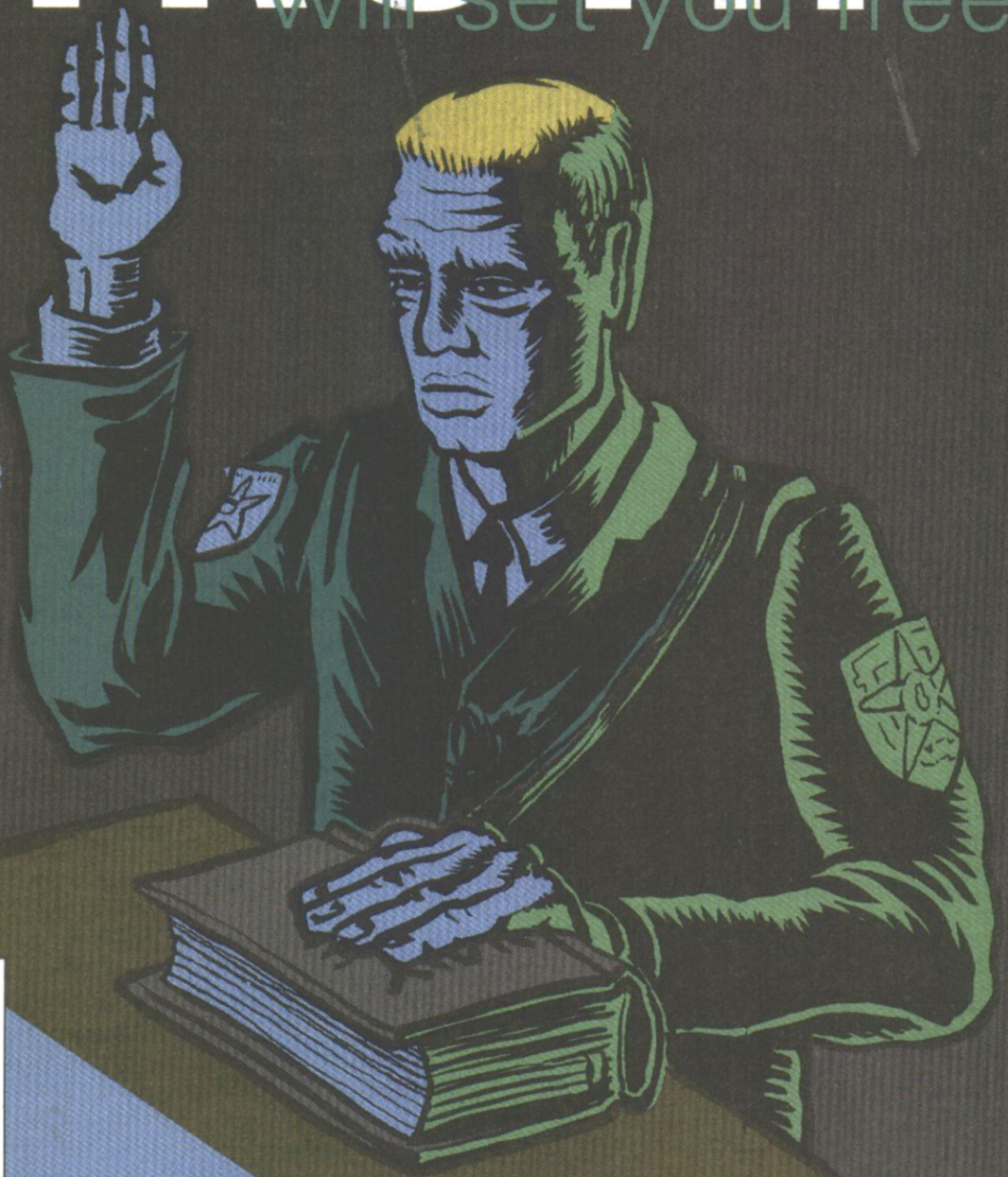
January 20-February 2, 1997

In THESE TIMES

The **TRUTH** will set you free

Apartheid's
enforcers trade
confessions
for amnesty.

David Goodman
reports



\$2.50/CANADA \$3.00



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORIAL

THE LINE ITEM VETO DEGRADES DEMOCRACY

Early last year, as part of Newt Gingrich's Contract With America, Congress passed the line item veto. This tribute to Ronald Reagan, who began the fight for such a law when he was president, changes the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. The new law allows the president to cancel specific dollar amounts of appropriations as well as new spending authority for items such as food stamps, Medicare and Social Security. It also gives the president the power to annul tax breaks that benefit fewer than 101 people. The law is slated to go into effect this month, at the beginning of Bill Clinton's second term.

To prevent this, six members of Congress, led by Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV), have filed a lawsuit challenging the new law's constitutionality. As Rep. David Skaggs (D-CO) says, the line item veto "gives one individual extraordinary power that is now held by the people's representatives in Congress." President Clinton has as much as conceded this point. Even if the veto is rarely used, Clinton said when he signed the measure in April, the threat of using it "changes the whole shape of budget negotiations" in favor of the executive branch. That shift in the balance of power, say the members of Congress in their lawsuit, is a clear violation of the intent of the framers of the Constitution.

The line item veto is part of the most undemocratic tendency in American governmental structure in this century: the steady shift of power and authority from Congress—and particularly from the House of Representatives—to the president and the various administrative agencies under his control. This process began in the late 19th century, when the executive branch took action to protect large corporations from popular outrage over their increasing dominance of American life.

The first federal regulatory agency, the Interstate Commerce Commission, was established in 1877 to help railroads limit competition and to protect them both from regulation by state governments controlled by anti-corporate populists and from having to pay rebates to large shippers of goods who played one railroad off against another. In 1914, the Federal Trade Commission was established to act as a buffer against attempts to break up giant corpora-

tions under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. And in 1920, in the first explicit transfer of power from Congress to the president, the Bureau of the Budget was established in the executive branch. This move shifted control over government spending decisions from the more open and politically accountable congressional budgetary process mandated by the Constitution, to a group of bureaucrats appointed by the president.

These modest beginnings have spawned a whole host of other federal administrative agencies ostensibly designed to regulate various industries. These agencies have routinely been headed by executives of the very corporations they were formed to regulate. The people running such agencies as the Securities Exchange Commission, the Federal Communications Commission and the various fisheries management councils make their decisions in virtual secrecy. And because they are not elected, they need not answer to the electorate. Even those newer

agencies designed to address social questions, such as the EPA and OSHA, are shielded from public scrutiny.

The line item veto marks a culmination of this historical process. The new law gives the president more power over the shaping of legislation not only by granting him the right to eliminate specific kinds of

The line item veto is the culmination of an undemocratic shift of power from the Congress to the president.

spending in bills otherwise to his liking, but also by providing him with more leverage over individual legislators. As Skaggs argues, "it's not far-fetched" to imagine that President Reagan—had he had the line item veto in the '80s—would have threatened to veto spending for programs supported by Skaggs unless Skaggs voted to provide money for the contras and their illegal war against Nicaragua.

Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) complains that it would be "a terrible injustice" if the opponents of the line item veto "were to prevail and Congress would once again be given the green light to continue their long-standing practice of wasteful spending." But, of course, it is social spending, not wasteful spending, that is the target of this innovation. Spending to promote foreign arms sales, unneeded military technology, covert CIA activities, counterproductive drug war efforts and a host of direct and indirect corporate subsidies is protected from the line item veto, and in any case would never be the target of this president—or any other in the post-war era.

Though also dominated by corporate money and power, Congress is much more representative of the American people than the executive branch, as it was designed to be. Members of Congress are, therefore, much more sensitive to public pressure. Let's hope Byrd and his colleagues are successful in their effort to defend Congress' role in our political system. ◀

IN THESE TIMES
 "...with liberty and justice for all"

Editor: James Weinstein
Managing Editor: Deidre McFadyen
Senior Editors: Joel Bleifuss, David Moberg,
 Salim Muwakkil, Patricia Aufderheide
Culture Editor: J.W. Mason
Asst. Managing Editor: Dave Mulcahey
Copy Editor: Lisa Robbins
Contributing Editors: Linda DeLibero,
 Wilkes Harvey, Diana Johnstone,
 Pete Karman, Chris Lehmann, Jim McNeill,
 Fred Weir
Editorial Interns: Jennifer Patterson,
 Norman Wishner

Art Director: Peter Hannan
Associate Art Director: Kit Boyce
Assistant Art Director: Jim Rinnert
Cartoonist: Terry LaBan

Publisher: James Weinstein
Associate Publisher: Beth Schulman
Assistant Publisher: Claudia Morris

Business Manager: Robert Larson
Circulation Director: Jake Blankenship
Advertising Director: Patricia Gray

In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 303 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 21, No. 5) published Jan. 20, 1997, for newsstand sales Jan. 20-Feb. 2, 1997. (773) 772-0100. Member: Alternative Press Syndicate. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright © 1997 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times* contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI. All rights reserved. *In These Times* is indexed in both the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Publisher does not assume liability for unsolicited manuscripts or material. Manuscripts or material unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All correspondence should be sent to: *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. E-mail: itt@igc.apc.org. For customer service and to place subscription orders, call toll free: (800) 827-0270. Advertising rates sent on request. Available back issues are \$5 each; specify volume and number. All letters received by *In These Times* become property of the newspaper. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form.



COVER © 1997 KIT BOYCE

© 1997 TERRY LABAN

InTHESETIMES

CONTENTS

Volume 21, Number 5

The truth will set you free
*South Africa's truth commission lets
 apartheid's enforcers go free in exchange
 for confessions.*

DAVID GOODMAN

12



Bitter medicine
*Canada is taking an ax to its
 popular health care system.*

NICOLE NOLAN

16



Green-friendly economics
*Ecological economists want
 to make capitalism safe for
 the biosphere.*

JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER

24

FEATURES

- The defects of local government** • Charles P. Sohner20
In the End: The Web swindle • Ana Marie Cox32

REVIEWS

- In the Arts: The People vs. Larry Flynt** • Linda DeLibero22
Speed Read: Inside Out: A Memoir of the Blacklist • Pat Aufderheide28

DEPARTMENTS

- Letters**4
Sylvia • Nicole Hollander4
In Short6
Appail-O-Meter7
The Big Picture • Steve Brodner8
Huge Mouth • Peter Hannan11

LETTERS

Dodging persecution

Fred Weir's article "Dodging the Russian draft" (December 9) mentions only economic reasons for evading service in Russia's armed forces (conscripts are malnourished, unpaid, ill-clothed, etc.). Another important reason for avoiding conscription has to do with discrimination against national minorities. Minorities are disproportionately represented among the thousands of victims of hazing incidents, random beatings and firearm "accidents" in the Russian army. Now that many former republics have become independent states, ethnic groups living in "autonomous republics" still ruled by Moscow are becoming the main focus of nationalists' prejudice. This prejudice takes especially nasty forms in the military. For example, newspapers published in Tatarstan's capital, Kazan, are full of accounts of cruel mistreatment of conscripts simply because of their Tatar ethnicity. The

situation is similar in some other autonomous republics as well.

Sabirzyan Badertinov
New York

Read Chomsky ...

I expect better from *ITT* than Adam Fifield's "Peace Without Justice" (December 23). Apparently the irony of the U.S. State Department funding an inquiry into the crimes of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia is lost on Fifield. We will, of course, have to wait a very long time for the State Department to fund an inquiry into the crimes of the U.S. government in Cambodia, but that would at least be an honest place to start, and—imagine—the perpetrators wouldn't have to be extradited. There's not a word about U.S. responsibility for the Cambodian nightmare anywhere in this article, nor is there any discussion of the appalling hypocrisy of the State Department in funding an inquiry such as this which will no

doubt ignore the U.S. role in the tragedy. By what moral authority can the United States lobby for a "truth" commission on Cambodia? The very concept should evoke ridicule.

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman documented the shameful reporting on Cambodia in the West in their 1979 book *After the Cataclysm: Post-war Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology*. It's a shame to see a comparable level of reporting in a progressive journal in 1996. Judging from Fifield's piece, I would guess he hasn't read this book. He should, as should your editors.

Tod E. Strohmayer
Columbia, Md.

... or indict him?

As we urge the prosecution of the guilty in the Cambodian holocaust, let us not forget a major "unindicted co-conspirator": Noam Chomsky.

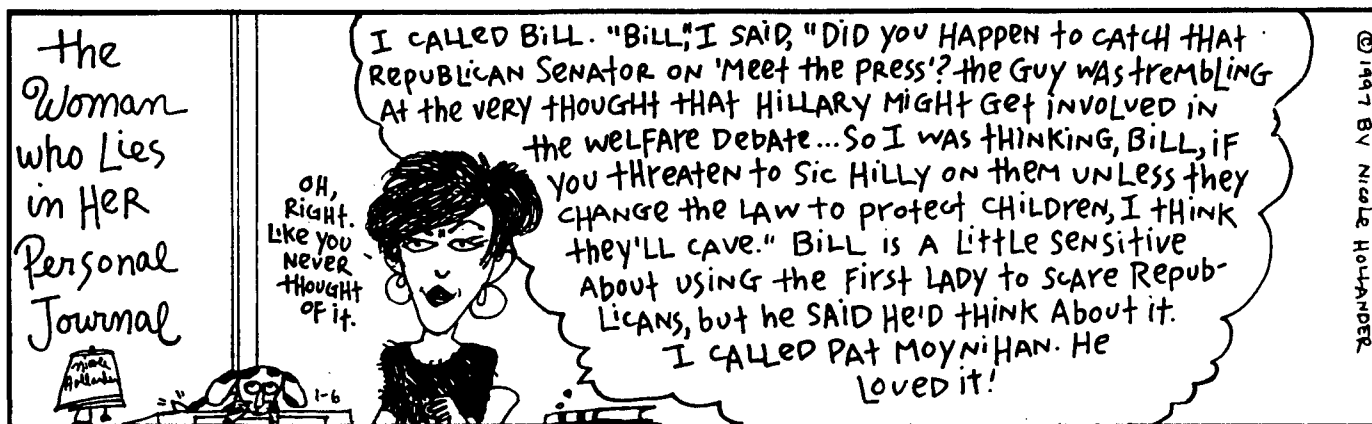
Blinded by a knee-jerk anti-imperialism, Chomsky spent years denying, minimizing or attempting to shift the blame for the Cambodian slaughter. As far as I know, he has never apologized for this, or even admitted he was wrong.

Taras Wolansky
Jersey City, N.J.

Adam Fifield replies: If Tod Strohmayer had read my article in its entirety, he would see that I did in fact discuss U.S. complicity in the Cambodian atrocities. As I wrote, the State Department, wary of exposing its his-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



story of covert support for the Khmer Rouge in the late '70s and early '80s, has consistently undermined attempts to investigate war crimes in Cambodia. That is why it's so important that Congress compel—or shame—the State Department into action.

TV-land nostalgia

I was amazed to read Pat Aufderheide's statement ("Digital TV standards and the public interest," December 23) that "in the '60s and '70s, a rough public interest standard had emerged for old-fashioned TV. In addition to their commercial fare, broadcasters offered news, public affairs, fair treatment of controversial and electoral issues, children's shows and community programming. But as [FCC chairman Reed] Hundt grimly noted, the Reaganites killed all that. ..."

This portrayal of an earlier Golden Age is complete nonsense. Action for Children's Television (ACT) came into existence in 1968 because of the steady deterioration of children's TV, and that condition still prevailed when the FCC's massive report of 1979 confirmed that children were "drastically underserved." Erik Barnouw's classic, *The Sponsor*, which extensively documented the erosion of public affairs programming, the coming of "pop doc" and the "lethal effects" of commercialization on the public sphere, was published in 1978, well before Reagan. Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swardlow's *Remote Control*, also published in 1978, was another devastating attack on TV's adverse effect on electoral campaigning, among other matters, noting that "Nixon would have had trouble being re-elected if television news had not acquiesced in his refusal to be covered in the 1972 campaign."

It is equally surprising to see Aufderheide set up Reed Hundt as a public interest spokesperson. For those of us who believe that media structure is of central importance in shaping media

performance, Hundt's role in sanctioning a series of giant mergers and in pushing the Telecommunications Act of 1996, while vigorously pursuing Free Radio Berkeley and trying to put it out of business, makes him possibly even more damaging to public interest standards than the Reaganites. Their gutting of rules is easier to rectify than the major centralization and monopolization of the air waves that Hundt has enthusiastically pushed. Aufderheide cites Hundt's view "that it was time to establish, once again, a public interest



standard for broadcasters." Apart from undermining its structural base, what has he done for such a standard in his years in office?

Edward S. Herman
Penn Valley, Pa.

Pat Aufderheide replies: I appreciate Ed Herman's close reading. I agree, the old public interest standard was not wonderful, and any gains resulted from political battles. Even this weak standard is now gutted, and we need to redefine the public interest. While the Telecommunications Act mostly equates the public interest with competition, it also upholds some traditional public interest notions. As the act and other policies are implemented, there are small windows of opportunity. Whether you regard these opportunities as insignificant or worth fighting for is a political choice. The fact that Reed Hundt—generally a champion of the competition-among-media-giants school—also champions public interest

standards in mass media may be seen as a contradiction, a fig-leaf strategy, a political opportunity or all three simultaneously.

Profiling saves lives

I just had the chance to read Sam Hussein's "Profiles in discrimination" (December 9). The piece is a distortion of reality and somewhat weak on both recent and long-term history.

He cites El Al as an example of how stereotypes are used in profiling potentially dangerous passengers. He fails, of course, to note that El Al questions every single passenger with the same stringent requirements, imposing such reviews on Israelis as well. He also fails to note that American Jewish military personnel were prohibited for years from even stepping off Air Force planes taking them through Arab countries to bases in various parts of the world. I personally saw orders to this effect.

But Hussein's main failing is that he ignores the reality about the source of hijackings as well as worse impositions on the civilian flying public around the world. Unhappily, and perhaps unfairly to most people from those areas, the majority of perpetrators have come from the Middle East. The ACLU and Hussein notwithstanding, the safety of the flying public is more important than some inconveniences that may be visited upon a very few from time to time. The fact is many Arabs travel quite freely on El Al when they wish, as on other airlines.

That a profile is a stereotype is almost a redundant statement. What else would it be?

Joseph J. Honick
San Francisco

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters.

InSHORT



Are there no workhouses?

If you're currently receiving welfare benefits in Virginia, the state's Department of Social Services has some good news for you: It may be able to set you up with a new job just as soon as the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) rounds up a few more undocumented immigrants.

Last November, the INS and Virginia's welfare agency started a pilot program to place welfare recipients in jobs made available when the INS arrests undocumented workers. Officials expect the program to provide 300 to 400 jobs per year for the state's 59,000 welfare recipients. Wages for these jobs average \$7 to \$8 an hour, according to INS spokesperson Bill Strassberger, and a lucky few will be able to land relatively high-paying jobs in such fields as

asbestos removal.

The INS hopes to expand the program to the heavy-immigration states of California, New York, Texas, Illinois and Florida—a sign of how desperate state welfare administrators are to “move people from welfare to work.”

While welfare “reform” laws have cut educational and job training options in favor of strict requirements to find paid work or be placed in workfare, job placement efforts across the nation seem to have generated more hot air than actual jobs. New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani recently claimed that of the 210,000 people who have left the welfare rolls in the past 22 months, “as [many] as 70,000” may have found permanent employment. The next day, however, Giuliani admitted that the city doesn't track those who leave the rolls. Moreover, says Karen Yau of the National Employment Law Project, figures compiled by the city's Human Resources Administration in 1995 found that only 10 percent of workfare participants reported finding full-time jobs.

The real value to states of these job placement programs, critics charge, is to reduce the welfare rolls by cutting off benefits to those who fail to meet the increasingly onerous job-search requirements. In Beloit, Wis., Circuit Court Judge James Welker has taken this logic one step further: He has threatened to sentence women to jail time for “non-support” if they fail to find paid work, according to Pat Gowens of

Milwaukee Welfare Warriors. Gov. Tommy Thompson's much-ballyhooed Wisconsin Works program (already widely implemented, even though the state legislature has yet to ratify it) has resulted in few new job placements, with the notable exception of women who have been hired to help administer the workfare program. In one case, Gowens reports, a state job-placement office ordered women to report to a local Pop-eye's Fried Chicken outlet at 7 a.m. each day. Those not chosen by the restaurant manager for work were sent home without compensation, even for transportation.

And as in other states, women are unable to refuse these jobs without jeopardizing their benefits. “The recipients are between a rock and a hard place,” says Yau. In New York

© 1997 TERRY LABAN

City, welfare regulations allow people to refuse unacceptable job placements or workfare assignments—such as those that don't provide adequate child care or pay a substandard wage—but these are rarely enforced.

Most welfare recipients say they would gladly take decent jobs, but few are available. A recent study by Columbia University researcher Katherine Newman found that four Harlem fast-food restaurants received an average of 14 applications for every job opening. And even in areas where jobs are plentiful, many may be literally unaffordable for poor people, especially when they fail to provide medical coverage or child care. "We have a real low unemployment rate here," says Tamara Baggett of JEDI Women, an economic justice group in Utah. "We have lots of jobs, but you can't support your family on \$6 an hour."

—Neil deMause

APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



By David Putrelle

Smurf you! 5.3

Dangers lurk in strange places. The Associated Press reports that a Wal-Mart store in Ontario has removed the innocently named Berry Luvin' Baby Smurf doll from its shelves—for teaching a toddler how to curse like



a sailor. After one Ontario woman gave the doll to her granddaughter, the girl's family discovered (as the AP delicately put it) that "a squeeze of the doll's hand causes it to giggle, followed by a garbled sentence that sounds like an obscenity." The girl, of course, began repeating what she'd heard. "My poor grandchild has been punished for saying these words and she got it from this stupid doll," complained the gift-giving grandmother. "If a 2 1/2-year-old can pick it up, other kids will pick it up as well."

Soccer moms destroy civilization! 6.2

A stunning journalistic revelation has wafted up from the pages of the neocon *Weekly Standard*. Apparently women have now become the First Sex in America, or so Christopher Caldwell's recent cover story suggests. "Women now constitute a class—a dominant class," Caldwell asserts in a lengthy screed entitled "The Feminization of America." And they're recasting American civilization—from the outcome of elections to the coverage of the Olympics—to fit their admittedly overemotional and possibly a bit irrational whims. Caldwell is plenty ticked off about the "soft focus" coverage of the summer games, which transformed a nice manly contest into a "big sob story about cancer and dying fathers." (Actually, we thought that was John Tesh's fault.) Worse still, even though the ladies "are less interested in politics and don't know what they think about political issues ... they are likelier to turn out at the polls than men."

Knocking 'em dead 4.2

British funeral directors are mortified by *C U Burn*, a new television series that portrays their profession in a less than flattering light. The show, London's *Daily Telegraph* reports, depicts the antics of a pair of less-than-scrupulous undertakers who carelessly cremate the wrong people, distribute drugs to unsuspecting mourners, and sometimes bury people who aren't quite dead yet. "Humor about death is all very well, but this program is sick and must be banned," one outraged Chelsea funeral director told the *Telegraph*. "It sends out the wrong message. Everything is meticulously done at funeral parlors. Ashes do not get mixed up and corpses never sit bolt upright in the coffin. We have extremely high standards. There is not room in most coffins for two corpses to be placed together. It is worrying that the public will see these acts on television and believe they really happen."

FDA moves on mad cow disease

In an effort to ensure that mad cow disease, otherwise known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), does not break out in the United States and endanger humans, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has at last proposed a ban on the feeding of cows to cows.

In Britain, BSE turned into a cattle epidemic after farmers gave their cows high-protein feed supplements made from the rendered protein of infected sheep and cows (see "The First Stone," April 15 and May 13, 1996). Laboratory analysis has now shown that at least 14 Britons have contracted the deadly human form of BSE, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, from eating infected meat, and John Lanchester reported last month in the *New Yorker* that another 60 cases are under investigation.

Under the proposed FDA ban, any feed that contains material rendered from the carcasses of sheep, cows, goats, deer, elk and mink will be prohibited from being fed back to other ruminants (cud-chewers) or mink.

In a January 2 announcement, FDA Commissioner David Kessler explained: "If for some reason a case of BSE were to occur in the United States—and it is important to emphasize that not even one case of BSE has ever been found here—the steps we are taking today would confine it to the individual animal and greatly decrease the potential risk to humans. In essence, this proposal would build a protective barrier against the spread of BSE."

While it is true that a full-blown case of BSE has never been found in the United States, some scientists fear that the U.S. cattle population may nonetheless be infected. In the fall of 1985, before mad cow disease had been discovered in

Continued on page 9

JACK VALENTI AGREES TO MORE REALISTIC TV RATINGS SYSTEM.

G

GARBAGE

PG

PUTRID
GARBAGE

**PG
14**

PUTRID GARBAGE
14 TIMES WORSE
THAN USUAL

TG

TOXIC GARBAGE
GOVERNMENT WILL BURY
YOUR CHILD UNDER SUPER
FUND PROGRAM



3 - . / -

Continued from page 7

Britain, Richard Marsh, a veterinary scientist at the University of Wisconsin, warned that a bovine form of scrapie (the sheep disease from which Britain's BSE epidemic originally sprang) was going undiagnosed in the United States. Marsh reported to the U.S. Animal Health Association that an outbreak of transmissible mink encephalopathy (the mink form of BSE) had wiped out a mink farm in Wisconsin. The infected animals had been fed cows afflicted with downer cow syndrome, a condition that afflicts about 100,000 American cattle each year.

Marsh, who is now a member of the government's Scrapie/BSE Consultants Group, has tried in recent years to convince government officials that the United States is at serious risk of an outbreak of mad cow disease. He is not alone in that opinion. Since 1991, some scientists at the Department of Agriculture have advocated a ban similar to the one Kessler proposed earlier this month. A 1991 internal Agriculture Department report revealed that some staff scientists believed "that a spongiform encephalopathy agent is present in the U.S. cattle population."

But opposition from the U.S. livestock, feed and rendering industries prevented any action being taken. As the 1991 Agriculture Department report explained, the "disadvantage" of such a ban was that it "could pose major problems" for these industries. Fear of alienating corporate interests may also explain why it has taken the FDA nine months to propose the ban, after promising last March to expedite regulations to deal with the threat of BSE. An FDA spokesman says it will be a "matter of months" before the proposed rule is finalized. The spokesman, however, did not know when the ban would go into effect since the schedule for implementation has yet to be determined.

—Joel Bleifuss

Wellstone for president

IN A DECEMBER 17 INTERVIEW, SEN. PAUL WELLSTONE (D-MN) told me, "I am going to think about the way I can make the biggest contribution on the national level to building a progressive politics." Does that way include a run for the presidency? Wellstone has said that the 1996 election was his last race for Minnesota office. Now Steve Perry reports in the Twin Cities' *City Pages*: "A mounting buzz around Washington and Minnesota alike has Paul Wellstone examining seriously the prospect of running for president in 2000. The possibility reportedly informed his otherwise curious choice to join Jesse Helms' Senate Foreign Relations Committee, what remains of the left-leaning element of the national Democratic Party is said to be enthusiastic." —J.B.

Reefer madness

Last November, California and Arizona passed ballot initiatives (Propositions 215 and 200, respectively) legalizing marijuana for therapeutic purposes. Law enforcement officials, who stridently opposed the initiatives, are now looking to the federal government to use its jurisdiction over physicians to crack down on medicinal marijuana.

The California law allows physicians to "recommend" but not to prescribe marijuana, and specifically exempts physicians from prosecution. Nonetheless, on December 30, federal drug czar Barry McCaffrey announced that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) will revoke the registration of doctors who recommend marijuana. Without federal registration, a physician cannot prescribe controlled substances and often cannot maintain malpractice insurance or hospital privileges.

Attorney General Janet Reno said the Justice Department will use existing enforcement programs to counteract the state initiatives, such as monitoring high volumes of recommendations or prescriptions for controlled substances. The department will review the results and decide whether to suspend licenses or take "further enforcement action." In late December, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that these enforcement programs will include the use of surveillance and informants.

Ironically, since Proposition 215 passed, California doctors have become more reluctant to write recommendations for the state's handful of buyer's clubs providing emergency relief for AIDS sufferers and others in need of medicinal marijuana.

The scientific community has been caught in a Catch-22 over marijuana: Many leading professional associations are hesitant to advocate the legalization of marijuana for medicinal purposes because marijuana hasn't been properly studied, yet studies

Plausible deniability

IN THESE TIMES' RECENT coverage of the CIA-contra cocaine connection elicited this anecdote from a reader in Texas, who interviewed for a job with the CIA as a college senior in 1985. The young man asked the CIA recruiter whether he would be required, if he accepted a



©1997 TERRY LABAN

job with the agency, to do anything illegal. The recruiter steeped his fingers, looked out the window and replied, "We are answerable only to the president of the United States, and we tell him only what we want him to know." —J.B.

cannot be conducted until the drug is legalized for therapeutic purposes. Dr. Donald Abrams of the University of California-San Francisco, for example, has been trying fruitlessly for years to win DEA approval to conduct a study on the efficacy of marijuana for the wasting syndrome of AIDS. The active cannabinoids which may be most effective in treating spasticity disorders, epilepsy, glaucoma and other serious illnesses have not been clinically tested either. People who report improvements in these conditions from smoking marijuana have not had the benefit of studies to determine the optimal dosages of the helpful compounds.

Regulatory responsibility for drugs was transferred from the surgeon general to the attorney general and his or her chief narcotics officer under the Controlled Substances Act of 1970. The new laws in California and Arizona could represent a shift back to control over drugs by doctors, instead of law enforcement. As Richard Bonnie and Charles Whitebread write in *The Marijuana Conviction: A History of Marijuana Prohibition in the United States*, early drug prohibitions all made exceptions for medical use, and Congress has historically taken roundabout means to control narcotics because such regulation was understood to be a right reserved by states under the 10th Amendment. (In 1925, the Supreme Court ruled that "direct control of medical practice in the states is beyond the power of the Federal Government.")

The American Medical Association (AMA) testified against the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, which virtually ended the medicinal use of marijuana by imposing steep taxes on the drug. Dr. William C. Woodward, legislative counsel for the AMA, argued that the law would create needless restrictions on physicians. Prophetically, Woodward argued that the Marijuana Tax Act would prevent scientific studies of the use of cannabis for medicine and of the breeding of non-psychoactive strains for industrial use.

Californians for Medical Rights, one of the lead organizations that worked to pass Proposition 215, has announced that a group of physicians plans to file a lawsuit to seek either a declaratory judgment of physicians' First Amendment rights to recommend marijuana, or a restraining order against the DEA and Justice Department to prevent state actions against California physicians.

—Ellen Komp

Media perspective

EACH YEAR THE *TYNDALL REPORT*, A NEW YORK-BASED newsletter that monitors TV news coverage, lists the 10 stories to which news producers at ABC, CBS and NBC have given the most airtime on the networks' weekday nightly newscasts. In 1996, network producers found the following stories most fit to air, as measured in hours:

1. TWA Flight 800 crash off Long Island6:03
2. Bob Dole's 1996 presidential campaign.....5:38
3. The wars in the former Yugoslavia.....5:01
4. The O.J. Simpson wrongful death trial.....4:12
5. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict.....4:04
6. The Whitewater investigation3:36
7. The Olympic Games in Atlanta3:37
8. ValuJet Flight 592 crash in the Everglades.....3:04
9. The 1996 GOP convention in San Diego2:58
10. The NYSE-NASDAQ bull market2:54

—J.B.

Clearcut disaster

On November 18, as the first winter rains in the Pacific Northwest came down from the Gulf of Alaska, a landslide in a rural area near Roseburg, Ore., crashed down onto the home of Rick and Susan Moon, killing them along with two friends who were visiting for the evening. The Moons' two children managed to escape before the house was crushed under a torrent of mud and boulders.

A couple of days later, Delsa Hammer of Coos Bay was driving west on Highway 38 through the coastal range toward the town of Reedsport when a landslide swept her car off the road and into the raging Umpqua River. Hammer drowned inside her car.

Before the week was over, landslides killed three more people in Oregon. In all but one case, the landslides occurred near sites that had been clearcut in the last 10 years. The

The CIA's media minions

READERS WITH AN APPETITE FOR MORE DEBATE SURROUNDING THE *SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS'* EXPOSÉ OF THE CIA-CONTRA cocaine connection should pick up the current issue of *EXTRA!*, in which Norman Solomon details the efforts of the mainstream press to perform "damage control for the CIA." Highlights include a background check on *Washington Post* national security correspondent Walter Pincus, one of the leading debunkers of the *Mercury News* series. From 1955 to 1957, Pincus, according to his curriculum vitae, "served in the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps, stationed in Washington." In 1960, Pincus was *Washington* correspondent for three North Carolina newspapers. During that year, he twice represented the United States at international conferences at the behest and the expense of the CIA. With that job history, it's easy to understand why John McCaslin, in the July 31, 1996 issue of the *Washington Times*, described Pincus as a journalist "who some in the agency refer to as 'the CIA's house reporter.'" —J.B.

coastal range of Oregon is one of the most intensively logged mountain ranges in the world. Between Astoria and Brookings, the timber giants of the Northwest have stripped millions of acres of mountainside in industrial clearcuts.

A large clearcut logged by the Champion International Corp. in 1987 was to blame for the landslide that killed the Moons and their friends. When Champion announced its plans to log this site, Rick Moon worried about the possible effects of the clearcut, not only on his home but on the fish population in nearby Hubbard Creek, a tributary of the Umpqua River—a stream beloved by fly fishermen from Herbert Hoover to Zane Grey. Moon wrote of his concerns to the Oregon Department of Forestry and urged it to halt the clearcut.

State foresters and geologists had visited the site Champion planned to log. They found that parts of the fatal mountainside's slopes were near vertical and noted that it posed extremely high risks of landslides if logged. But Forestry Department officials never passed this information on to the Moons or other nearby homeowners. "The Oregon Department of Forestry is not in the business of protecting houses," Roseburg area director Craig Royce commented a week after the Moon catastrophe.

The landslide that killed Delsa Hammer can also be traced back to a recent clearcut that environmental officials knew might trigger a slide. In fact, the Oregon Department of Transportation had tried to keep the parcel's owner from logging the area. "This was one of those places we just didn't want touched," says Bill Otis, an engineer with the Department of Transportation. But the Forestry Department, which had jurisdiction over the site, gave the green light, and the trees, then the hillside, came down.

"The evidence is indisputable that clearcutting increases the frequency of landslides in the first 20 years after the logging occurs," says Frederick Swanson, a forest geologist at Oregon State University who has done extensive research on the relationship between logging methods, soil erosion and landslides. In a 1975 study, Swanson showed that landslides in clearcuts without logging roads occurred at a rate three times higher than slides in undisturbed forests. When roads, skid trails and yarding areas are constructed in the clearcut sites, the potential for landslides increases by orders of magnitude. The Champion clearcut that collapsed on the Moons' residence was bisected by a logging road and con-

tained numerous yarding sites.

Three weeks after his company's clearcut killed the Moons and their friends, Champion International CEO Dick Olson accepted a Corporate Stewardship Award from Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, who blathered, "Wherever Champion has a presence, it has shown that we can use our lands while protecting our natural heritage."

In light of the recent landslide deaths, few residents of the coastal mountains around the Umpqua River share Babbitt's warm regards. Even long-time local backers of the timber industry are worried. "I don't want to be labeled an environmentalist," says Lonnie Leonard, who lives on Hubbard Creek beneath a tract of forest scheduled for clearcutting by Roseburg Lumber. "But I'm in a bind. Wondering what the timber companies will do is like waiting for destruction. It's like having a sword dangling over your head and not knowing when it will fall."

—Jeffrey St. Clair

SOURCES

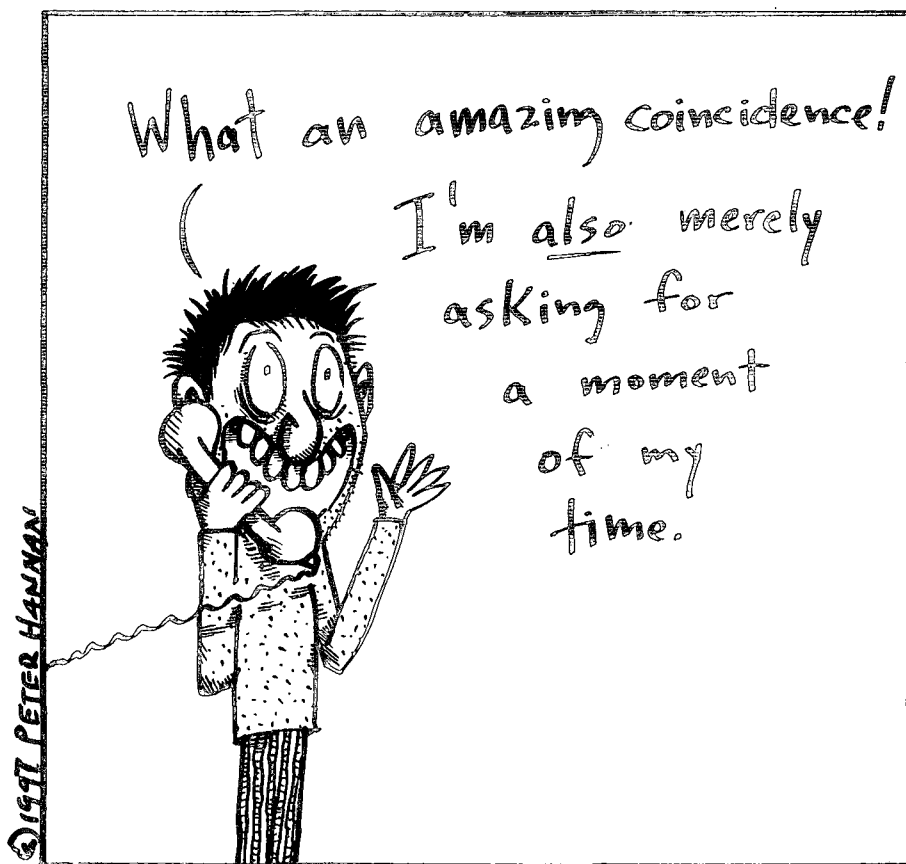
Neil deMause is a member of the editorial collective of *Brooklyn Metro Times*, a quarterly political zine.

Ellen Komp is a California-based freelance writer.

Jeffrey St. Clair is editor of *Wild Forest Review* in Oregon City, Ore.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



SOUTH AFRICA

The truth will set you free

N

ine policemen filed into the packed hearing room and took seats in the front row. The thick-necked, mustachioed Afrikaners, conspicuous as they strode through the mostly black audience, were clearly uncomfortable, some sweating profusely, some fidgeting, one furiously tapping his foot. They had been called to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the independent South African body charged with investigating apartheid-era crimes and ultimately deciding whether former perpetrators will get amnesty.

The men had been subpoenaed to testify about the "Guguletu Seven," seven young men killed in a shootout with police on March 3, 1986, in the Guguletu township near Cape Town. The police claimed they had stopped a terrorist attack, but evidence from eyewitnesses at the

time suggested that a number of the men had been captured and executed in cold blood by the police.

The late November hearing began with a gruesome police video of the crime scene, complete with closeups of bullet-riddled heads, that left the audience and commissioners gasping. As the video rolled, the mothers of the dead youths lost all pretense of composure. In a fit of rage and frustration, one threw her shoe at the policemen, sitting just 10 feet away, who had killed her son; several other women broke into loud sobs. Pandemonium followed. Chairs tumbled, one policeman bolted from the room, and I and other journalists ducked for cover. TRC staffers lunged for the women and swiftly hustled them out. The normally impassive truth commissioners were shaken. Commissioner Dumisa Ntsebeza, head of investigations for the 17-member TRC chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, implored the audience "not to let this hearing degenerate into a farce."

After seven months of listening to tales of police abuse, the commissioners—who in previous hearings often were polite verging on timid—seemed to discover their backbones. When the first of the nine subpoenaed men, Superintendent William Rudolf Liebenberg, took the stand, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed former head of the Cape Town security police's "terrorist tracking unit" faced a tenacious and impatient Commissioner Denzil Potgieter.

"These people were led into an ambush and killed, weren't they?" charged Potgieter. Liebenberg denied the accusation, but the commissioner held to the witness like a pit bull. Citing new evidence that the TRC had uncovered, Potgieter badgered, shouted, interrupted, contradicted, pointed and stabbed the air. Ten years after the incident, the commissioners assailed the myth that police killed the Guguletu Seven in a routine maneuver to stop terrorists, and charged that this notorious case was a death squad hit.

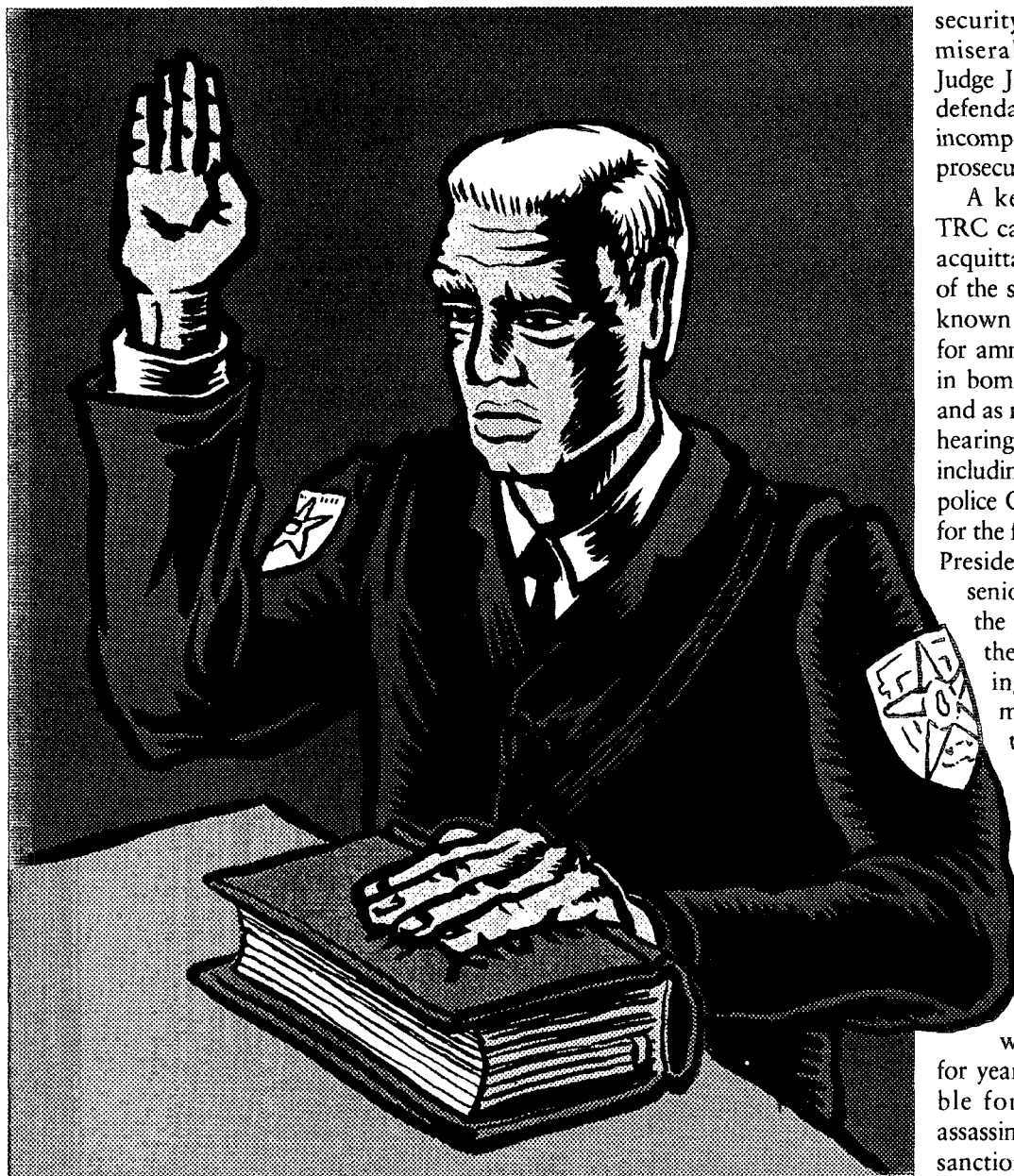
The hearing was a turning point. A truth commission that seemed frightened by its own shadow earlier in the year was coming into its own, and more truth was creeping into the grim puzzle of who did what during apartheid. But a nagging problem remained: If they applied for amnesty, these cops would most likely get away with the murders.

South Africa's TRC is now halfway through its two-year life. Since April, it has held 72 hearings in small villages and large cities around the country. It has heard a consistent and appalling litany of state-sanctioned abuses ranging from harassment to torture and murder.

Until September, TRC hearings were marked by an unrelenting stream of black victims and the nearly total absence of white witnesses or observers. Cynics derided it as the "Kleenex Commission" for its daily road show of anguished victims. People would vent and weep before audiences of

South Africa's truth commission permits apartheid's enforcers to trade confessions for amnesty.

By David Goodman
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA



security state. The effort failed miserably: Along with Malan, Judge Jan Hugo acquitted 19 co-defendants in the case, citing an incompetent and poorly prepared prosecution.

A key breakthrough for the TRC came the day after Malan's acquittal, when five ex-members of the security police death squad known as the Vlakplaas applied for amnesty for their involvement in bombings, weapons-smuggling and as many as 40 murders. In the hearings that followed, witnesses including former commissioner of police Gen. Johan van der Merwe for the first time implicated former President P.W. Botha and other senior government officials in the murders and bombings of the apartheid era. The hearings emboldened the commission. Archbishop Tutu triumphantly declared that he would remove the "velvet glove" the TRC had used in its effort to coax reluctant whites to participate.

A further boost to the process of reconstructing truth came from the trial of Col. Eugene de Kock, who headed the Vlakplaas for years. De Kock was responsible for dozens of deaths and assassinations during his officially sanctioned reign of terror. Over the course of his testimony during

other victims, truth commissioners would nod their head in mournful acknowledgment, and police perpetrators would be named but not pursued. Most white South Africans simply ignored the heartbreaking testimony. "Of course, we didn't know what was happening then," whites have told me repeatedly in their determination to absolve themselves of responsibility for apartheid. The tears, as always, have been confined to the victims.

But by September, political leaders and victims were clamoring for action. Anger and frustration were compounded on October 11 when Magnus Malan, a former general and minister of defense in the '80s, was acquitted of masterminding a 1987 hit-squad massacre in which 13 people—including seven children—were murdered. The seven-month trial, which cost nearly \$2 million, was the centerpiece of an effort to indict the kingpins of the apartheid

the 18-month trial, the extent of government involvement in atrocities became clear. De Kock implicated officials including not only Botha, but former President F.W. de Klerk as well. De Kock, found guilty on 89 charges and of six murders, was sentenced to two life sentences by Pretoria's Supreme Court.

Former presidents Botha and de Klerk continue to insist they knew nothing of de Kock's actions. The strategy is clear: Top brass intend to save themselves at the cost of apartheid's foot soldiers.

The cycle of admissions and denials has worked to lubricate the truth process. Low-level policemen have started to break ranks and talk. In the small town of Paarl, Alexander Faas testified that his unarmed son Adri was shot at point-blank range by police as he was walking home from the store in 1986. A magistrate determined that no one could be

held responsible for the murder. Then something unprecedented happened: When Faas left the witness stand, a surprise witness stepped forward. Capt. Peter Clayton, a so-called "colored" (mixed-race) policeman, was on duty the day Faas was murdered. Clayton recounted how Lt. Col. Oosthuizen, a white security policeman, had driven into the Paarl police station that evening and declared to the colored officers, "You people take too long. I'm going to kill a Hot-tentot tonight." Three minutes later, Clayton was called to the scene of a shooting just 1,000 feet away, where he saw Oosthuizen swaggering over Adri Faas' corpse.

"This has bothered me ever since then, especially when I see Mr. Faas around town. Now my conscience is clear," Clayton told me after his testimony. The policemen's "Blue Wall of Silence" had started to crumble.

In the latter part of 1996, the TRC began to tackle its most controversial task: granting amnesty to confessed perpetrators. As killers get set free, South Africans are forced as never before to ask themselves whether they can tolerate trading justice for truth.

Brian Mitchell is a mass murderer. The former security police officer gave the order in 1988 to attack a house in the small village of Trust Feed that he suspected belonged to supporters of the United Democratic Front, an anti-apartheid resistance group. But Mitchell's men got the wrong house: They went from room to room spraying machine-gun fire in a home filled with mourners participating in an all-night funeral vigil. Eleven people were killed. Mitchell was convicted of the murders and sentenced to 30 years in jail. In an emotional TRC amnesty hearing this fall, a sobbing Mitchell appealed to survivors and the commission to forgive him. On December 12, the TRC obliged, granting Mitchell amnesty.

The amnesty issue is the acid test of the entire reconciliation process. After months of numbing testimonials about official brutality, the first amnesty awards are sending shock waves through the country. Even TRC commissioners are shaken. "When I heard that Brian Mitchell was granted amnesty, I found it a very, very bitter pill to swallow," admits TRC Commissioner Wendy Orr. "Finally we had in front of us a real idea of what amnesty is: This man, who killed 11 people, was walking free. ... It sticks in your gut that people literally get away with murder."

What about justice? The question is raised often in South Africa these days. "Amnesty involves sacrificing a great measure of justice," concedes the Rev. Michael Lapsley, chaplain to the Trauma Center for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town. Lapsley has first-hand experience with this moral quandary. In 1990, he received a parcel bomb that blew off both his hands and an eye. He has already testified as a witness before the TRC about the incident. "The reality is that the TRC comes out of realpolitik," he says. "It comes out of a negotiated settlement and carries with it all the jagged edges of that settlement. ... I also think that it is clear to me that the alternative we had as a country

[when negotiations about the truth commission took place] was a civil war that would consume us all."

December 15, 1996 was the original deadline for people to apply for amnesty in South Africa. The deal was this: If you fully disclosed the details of crimes you committed between March 1, 1960 (the month of the Sharpeville massacre in which police killed 69 people) and December 5, 1993 (the day before agreement was reached to hold democratic elections in April 1994), and applied for amnesty by the deadline, you were eligible to be pardoned. Ignore the amnesty deal, and you were liable for criminal prosecution or civil suits.

As the deadline loomed, the "trickle of amnesty applications became a flood," says TRC Vice Chair Alex Boraine. Then on December 14, President Nelson Mandela bowed to pressure from the right-wing Freedom Front, the left-wing Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and Archbishop Tutu to extend the amnesty coverage to include crimes committed before May 10, 1994, the date Mandela took office. Mandela also agreed to extend the amnesty application deadline to May 10, 1997, ostensibly to offer the possibility of amnesty to both right- and left-wing militants who attempted to derail South Africa's first democratic elections in April 1994.

The unstated reason for extending the deadline is that the TRC has failed to deliver either the quantity or quality of perpetrators it had hoped to. By late December, the commission had received some 4,000 amnesty applications—about half of them from convicted prisoners looking for a quick way out of jail. It had received only 300 amnesty applications from the security forces. The ANC was promising up to 300 applications from former guerrilla fighters; the PAC was sending in about 600 applications from its ex-combatants; and the Inkatha Freedom Party—which has been widely implicated in apartheid violence—had submitted "only a couple of individual applications," according to TRC officials. To date, few senior leaders from the apartheid government, with the notable exception of former Minister of Law and Order Adrian Vlok, have indicated they will apply for amnesty.

Some critics contend that South Africa's amnesty provisions violate international law, which gives victims of gross human rights violations the right to seek legal redress in court. In a televised debate with Archbishop Tutu, South African legal scholar Andreas O'Shea insisted, "We have to consider whether this is truly reconciliation for the state to say, 'Whatever the person or victim might say, the state has decided the perpetrator will be forgiven, whatever their crime might be.' " While amnesty may help cleanse old wounds, O'Shea questioned, "is this a cleansing that is going to last?"

South Africa's attorney general's office has clashed with the TRC for hindering the prosecution of apartheid criminals. It has now become routine for apartheid perpetrators to rush to the TRC when they get wind that they may be

prosecuted for their past deeds. The attorney general then has few options but to wait for the outcome of the amnesty process, since there is little point in mounting a costly prosecution of someone who will be pardoned. So the backlog of apartheid-era criminal cases stacks up, and many will likely wither on the vine.

While criminal trials offer a more decisive brand of justice and punishment for perpetrators, the reality of recent trials has been sobering. Lapsley notes that the Malan trial "really illustrates the problem that the judicial system cannot deliver justice for apartheid crimes." While the TRC process is sorely deficient when it comes to punishing criminals, Lapsley argues that it is not completely devoid of justice. "I would make a fundamental distinction between retributive justice and restorative justice. And I think there is some measure of restorative justice which can come from the TRC process by providing reparations to victims."

It now appears that the TRC will be more generous in granting amnesty than even its supporters originally thought. The secretive TRC Amnesty Committee can deny amnesty to an applicant if the crime is found to lack a political motive, or if the crime was disproportionate to the stated political aims. The Brian Mitchell case was one that many assumed would be considered disproportionately severe for amnesty. Such assumptions were wrong. "Many of us have shifted in what we first thought about the granting of amnesty, where we thought that only a few people would get it," observes TRC Commissioner Mary Burton, a veteran anti-apartheid activist. In the wake of the Brian Mitchell decision, she says, "We now recognize that large numbers of people will be granted amnesty."

The TRC has proved that it can crack the middle levels of the security system, and a series of revelations is expected in 1997 from more senior security officials who are applying for amnesty. These admissions distinguish the South African TRC from other truth commissions around the world. "In Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, Haiti and other places, truth commissions received virtually no cooperation at all from the armed forces ... [and] in Chile and El Salvador, for example, the military still flatly deny their role in past abuses," Priscilla Hayner, a researcher writing a book on truth commissions worldwide, told South Africa's *Mail & Guardian* newspaper. "After viewing these examples, the process taking place in South Africa is quite remarkable."

Despite the accomplishments of the TRC, reconciliation will not come easily to South Africa. That is because the foremost legacy of apartheid violence is poverty, which continues unabated for millions of South Africans. As Commissioner Burton notes, "It's not good enough telling people to reconcile when they are still as poor and disadvantaged as they've been in the past."

Victims of apartheid are also troubled that the perpetrators still hold positions of power in their communities. For example, many of the nine policemen involved in the Guguletu Seven incident who were grilled by commissioners

in November occupy senior positions in the "new" South African Police. "Where the same magistrate or same head of police is still there in the same area and the same old attitudes prevail—I don't know how we are going to deal with that," says Burton. "We just have to put out that that is so."

Burton reflects that it may be possible to extract truth from perpetrators, but—withstanding Nelson Mandela's and Archbishop Tutu's pleas for South Africans to forgive—reconciliation may be too much to ask for some people. "We're expecting millions of people to have the kind of generosity of heart that no one in the world has had before. Why should they?" Burton asks. "We must be grateful when reconciliation happens, but we mustn't force people into a mold that doesn't match what their real feelings are." She says the TRC can act as "a buffer and sponge that absorbs people's desire for revenge, so [that vengeance] does not reflect back into society and add to the spiral."

One thing is certain: The process of truth recovery and reconciliation in South Africa will take far longer than the two-year life of the TRC. Michael Lapsley, with hooks for hands and only one eye, rejects the notion that there can be a quick fix for the decades-old wounds of apartheid. "I think the emotional, psychological and spiritual damage will take the next 100 years to heal. That," he insists, "is the damage of apartheid." A

David Goodman, southern Africa correspondent for *In These Times* in the '80s, is writing a book about post-apartheid South Africa.



Subscribe to ITT!

☐ **NEW SUBSCRIPTION.** You'll receive your first issue in 4-6 weeks. Please check price and terms below. **AST**

☐ **RENEW NOW.** We'll extend your current subscription for as long as you like. This saves you worries about expiring and helps us save money and the environment by not sending renewal notices and bills. **AST**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PRICES & TERMS

- ☐ One year, 26 issues of *In These Times*: \$36.95
☐ Six months, 13 issues: \$19.95 ☐ Institutional, one year: \$59.00
☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me

Canadian orders, add: \$27.50 (one year), \$13.50 (six months) postage.

All other foreign orders add: \$41.00 (one year), \$20.50 (six months).

Mail to: IN THESE TIMES Customer Service, 308 Hill St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054

For credit card orders call: 1-800-827-0270

CANADA

Bitter medicine

W

*Canada,
swept up in a
budget-cutting
frenzy, is
taking the
ax to its
popular public
health care
system.*

By Nicole Nolan

hen Toronto resident Lydia Batelaan goes into labor next month, she probably won't call her obstetrician. That's not because she's into alternative birthing techniques. For her first baby, Batelaan wants access to everything, including pain relief, that obstetricians have to offer. But after more than six months of searching, she still hasn't found an obstetrician willing to take her as a patient.

Batelaan is one of thousands of women who find themselves caught in the middle of a ferocious political battle between the Ontario government and the province's 22,000 doctors. The dispute started earlier this year when, in an attempt to control health care spending, the Progressive Conservative government led by Premier Mike Harris announced it was knocking 10 percent off doctors' fees and would no longer subsidize doctors' malpractice insurance, which costs up to \$18,000 a year

for high-risk fields like obstetrics, orthopedics and neurosurgery.

In July, obstetricians began refusing new patients to protest the government cuts. On November 8, many more of Ontario's 20,000 doctors stopped taking new patients and closed their after-hours clinics, and surgeons began refusing to do elective surgery. On December 13, many doctors closed their offices for the day in protest.

Last month, the government and the doctors' association reached a tentative deal, but the doctors haven't ratified it yet. If the dispute isn't resolved soon, women like Batelaan will have to go to the hospital emergency room and take whatever obstetrician is on call.

Since its inception over 28 years ago, universal public health insurance has been Canada's most popular social program. Poll after poll has shown Canadians' high regard for a system that treats everyone equally, regardless of ability to pay. A 1993 Gallup Poll found that 96 percent of Canadians prefer

their health care system to that of the United States. A recent poll by the government's Finance Department revealed that a majority of Canadians, including many who support spending cuts in other social programs, would rather see taxes go up than health care cut.

Yet despite Canadians' attachment to Medicare (the name for Canada's health care program), the system is becoming a frequent target for a government bent on cost-cutting. In the past four years, many Canadians have seen a significant drop in quality of care, as hospitals have closed and health care workers have been laid off. Preying on fears that Canada's aging population will put more pressure on the health care system, critics now call for privatized medicine. They charge that universal health care is a "luxury" that Canadians can no longer afford.

Public health insurance provides comprehensive benefits to Canadians. All "medically necessary treatment"—everything from visits to a family physician to neurosurgery—is paid for exclusively by the government. Canadian law forbids health care providers from charging extra fees to patients, and doctors bill the government on a fee-for-service basis. Most Canadian doctors earn between \$75,000 and \$180,000 annually—between one-tenth and one-sixth of what American doctors make. Hospitals and other health care providers, like home-care services and community clinics, receive the bulk of their budgets from the government.

Canadians have good reason to appreciate this system, generally recognized as one of the most equitable and cost-effective health care systems in the world. While the United States spends 14 percent of GDP on health care and still does not cover 35 million of its citizens, Canada spends less than 10 percent of its GDP on health care and covers all citizens. Until recently, Canadians were happy with the quality

of care they received. The 1993 Gallup Poll found that 89 percent of Canadians ranked the quality of their health care as good or excellent.

Unlike in the United States, cuts to health care budgets in Canada have been motivated less by spiraling costs than by the perceived need to cut the country's \$422 billion deficit at any price. Canadian per-capita health care spending is only slightly higher than that of most other industrialized nations. The country's current health care woes were exacerbated in 1995 when the federal government, determined to reduce the

in hospital beds because they were too weak or confused to remove the plastic lids from their lunch containers.

"Hospitals are scary places to venture into," wrote McKee. "If you are elderly, very sick or mentally ill and do not have a friend or family member looking out for your best interests while you are in hospital, you are in deep trouble."

Although Ontario's health care cuts are the ones making national headlines, other provincial governments—led by parties across the political spectrum—have plunged the knife far deeper into their health care budgets. The Quebec government

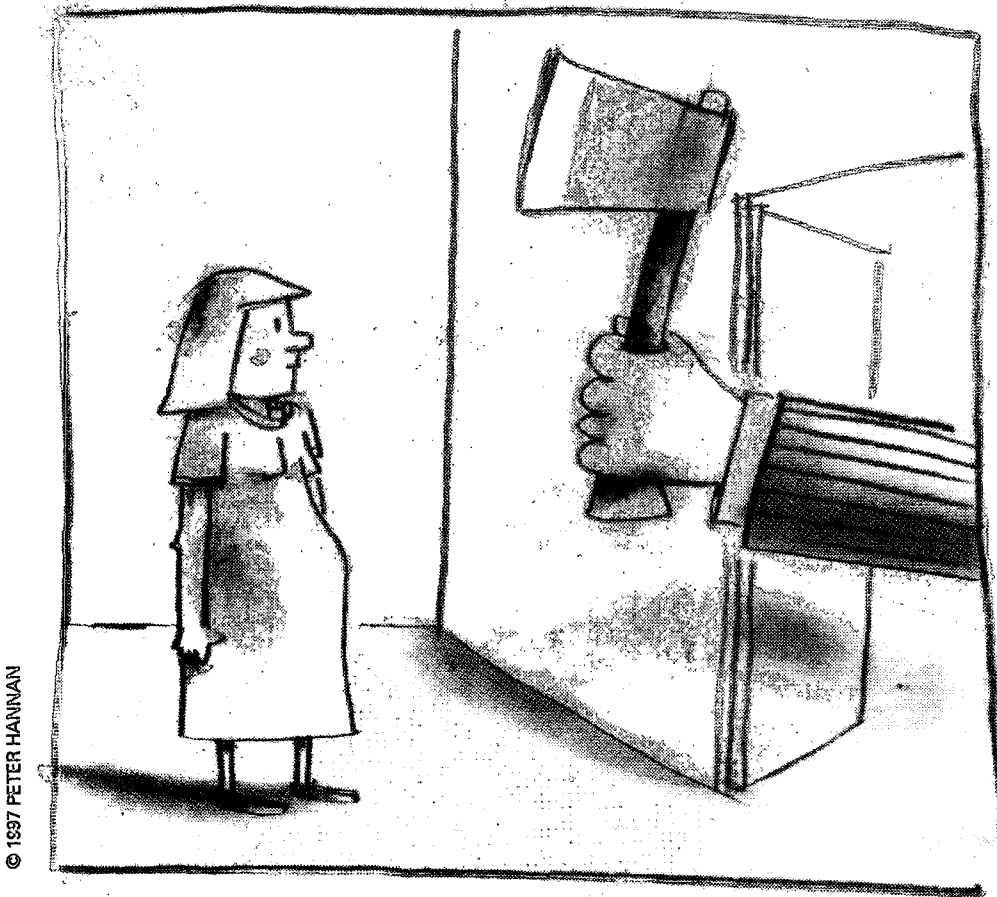
recently chopped \$140 million from its health care budget. The Manitoba government announced this summer that it was taking \$29 million out of the health care system. Saskatchewan closed 52 rural hospitals and froze its health care budget. In Nova Scotia, hospital closings and job losses have accompanied an 8 percent reduction in health spending over the past three years. The number of hospital workers in Prince Edward Island has been reduced by 13 percent.

By far the most radical health care spending cuts have been carried out in Alberta, Canada's hotbed of right-wing radicalism. The government, led by Premier Ralph Klein, cut Medicare spending by 12 percent over the past four years as part of a deficit-reduction plan. In the first year of cutbacks, 50 percent of Alberta's acute-care beds were closed. Over the past three years, heart surgery

waiting lists have doubled and waiting times for joint replacement surgery have tripled. In the provincial parliament, opposition members started to announce instances of hospital disasters, including the case of one two-week-old baby who died after waiting five hours to see a doctor.

Across Canada, the cuts have prompted considerable public outcry, forcing several governments to flip-flop on the issue (see sidebar). But overall, health care budgets are still decreasing and Medicare advocates worry that Canadians eventually will become frustrated with government cuts and look to private health care for solutions. "They're depriving public health care so much that they'll say privatization is the only way we have to go," says Jane Cornelius, president of the Ontario Nurses Association. "We'll end up with a two-tiered health system with American-style privatization."

In fact, 28 percent of Canadian medical care is already



© 1997 PETER HANNAN

deficit, announced that it would knock \$5 billion (or 38 percent) off the \$13.5 billion it passes on to Canada's provinces to pay for health care. (While health standards are enforced by federal law, the actual day-to-day running of health services is administered by the provinces, using money the federal government transfers to them from national coffers.) Provinces were left struggling to make ends meet while trying to slash their own deficits.

In Canada's national newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, Presbyterian minister Keith McKee described the effects of the cutbacks in Ontario, where the government announced it would cut hospital spending by 18 percent over the next three years. During visits to parishioners in Ontario hospitals, McKee said he discovered a urine bag overflowing because no one had time to empty it, rooms where the air conditioning was broken for weeks on end, and elderly patients left hungry

privately funded: Dental work, cosmetic surgery and optometry have never been covered by public health insurance. But Medicare advocates fear the introduction of privatized health care to medically necessary "core" services. If that happens, they say Canadians can kiss an equitable, cost-effective system goodbye.

"Overall costs for health care will rise, not fall, as private insurance steps in to fill the void left by retreating government programs," says health policy analyst Dr. Michael Rachlis. "The wealthy and the healthy will do fine. Poor people—and especially those who are sick—will not."

Once wealthy and powerful Canadians have a private system to fall back on, Medicare advocates argue, they'll abandon their support for the public system. Furthermore, if a private system coexists with a public system, the public system will inevitably be burdened with the high costs of difficult procedures. "It's called creaming and dumping," says Donna Wilson, a member of the Alberta-based organization Friends of Medicare. "The private businesses go after the cream—the easy and profitable procedures—thereby dumping the bigger, more expensive problems on the public system."

A number of powerful interests—including doctors, drug companies, for-profit biotechnology firms and American insurance companies—already are making a push toward a two-tiered system. Not surprisingly, government caps on doctors' fees go over like a lead balloon with most physicians. In addition, many doctors have become frustrated with the damage that government cuts to nursing staff and hospitals have done to the quality of care they provide. As a result, many Canadian doctors are coming around to supporting the idea of private health care.

"The government is expecting more services to be provided than they're willing to pay for," says Dr. Michael

Thoburn, executive director of professional services at the Ontario Medical Association. "Our position is that you either bring the bottom line up or the top line down, or you bring in alternative funding to fill in the gap."

At its annual meetings in 1995 and 1996, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), the doctors' professional body, narrowly defeated motions proposing a parallel private system and vowed to lead a national debate on two-tiered health care. Last March, the CMA held a closed-door health "summit" on the future of health care with three private, for-profit health care providers, including Liberty Health, owned by the Boston-based Liberty Mutual Group.

Having saturated their own market, American insurance companies like Liberty Health see opportunities in the Canadian market. "When you have \$76 billion (U.S. \$55.5 billion) in health care expenditures in Canada," says Wilson of Friends of Medicare, "you get a few people who want a piece of that pie."

In 1995, Liberty Health bought Ontario Blue Cross (one of Canada's largest providers of insurance for health care services, such as dentistry and drugs, not covered by Medicare) from its nonprofit owner, the Ontario Hospital Association. In 1994, Blue Cross President Dunbar Russel told the *Globe and Mail* that the company predicts the market for private insurance will double in the next five years as the population ages and government bows out of health care in the interests of cutting the deficit.

Insurance companies maintain they are committed to universal health care in Canada, but critics say that their business interests are more in line with privately funded health care. "Liberty Health's market is selling insurance for what the government no longer covers," says Mike McBane, coordinator of the pro-Medicare lobby group

Medicare still a sacred cow

Even as they cut hospital budgets and doctors' salaries, political leaders are anxious to be seen as defenders of Canada's Medicare. Direct attacks on the popular program are still considered the equivalent of political suicide. This summer, federal Health Minister David Dingwall said the government has no intention of permitting private medicine. "The values behind Medicare define this country," Dingwall told the *Globe and Mail*. "If we lose them, we lose part of our national soul."

In October, Premier Mike Harris of Ontario faced down one of the largest mass protests in the province's history by Ontarians unhappy with his massive cuts to social spending. He was anxious to assure voters that his government was not reducing health care expenditures. "Any time I see people who are concerned that they don't want us to cut health care, then I'm concerned if, for some reason, they think we are cutting health care, because we are not," Harris told reporters covering the protest, which drew from 125,000 to 150,000 people. In fact, while the province is holding health care dollars steady, if inflation and population growth are taken into account, real per-capita health care spending will fall by 3 percent in Ontario this year.

Even Alberta's Premier Ralph Klein, renowned for his steely-eyed approach to spending cuts and deficit reduction, has had to bend before the backlash against his health care policy. Finding himself going into an election year in the midst of widespread public protest and polls showing Albertans increasingly concerned about health care, Klein made an about-face on health care policy in November. The province will now increase health spending to such an extent that by the year 2000, nearly all the money that was cut from the system will have been restored.

Many other Canadian politicians are doing similar flip-flops, putting money back into health care to assuage public outrage over cuts. This summer, the Nova Scotia government promised a \$48 million injection into the province's health care system after a poll showed that 62 percent of Nova Scotians believed their health care is worse than it was five years ago. In Saskatchewan, Premier Roy Romanow also announced spending increases of \$29 million. —N.N.

Canadian Health Coalition. "They say they believe in core services but they believe that core should be shrunk. That would create a parallel health system."

Although health care funded primarily by the private sector is still a somewhat distant threat (it would require a change in Canadian law), for-profit medical companies are expanding in Canada. The health summit report expressed support for universal health care, but included a resolution to increase private-sector funding, management and delivery. Current law prohibits anyone but the government from paying for Canadians' health care, but it says nothing about who provides it. While governments fund hospitals and other health care providers, most of these facilities are actually owned by private, nonprofit corporations.

Recently, however, many provincial governments appear to favor turning to the for-profit sector for services traditionally performed by nonprofit corporations or public facilities. Earlier this year, the Ontario government passed a law allowing it to contract out services to for-profit providers. It recently announced that it would let for-profit companies bid against nonprofit ones to provide home-care service.

Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island now have private companies running their billing systems, and New Brunswick is preparing to do the same. Lab services, which have traditionally been provided by public hospitals, are now being privatized around the country.

Governments argue that for-profit providers are cheaper and more efficient, but supporters of the current system say costs will go up as for-profit companies move in, thereby putting even more pressure on public coffers. "The irony is, we're not going to save," says McBane of the Canadian Health Coalition. "That's demonstrated by the United States, which spends more money for less services than any other country."

The for-profit sector has begun to chip away at the principle of equity upon which the Canadian health care system is based. The Alberta government recently extricated itself from a prolonged battle with the federal government over its connivance at the misconduct of eye surgeon Howard Gimble. At Gimble's clinics, patients were charged a \$1,000 fee on top of the costs covered by Medicare for cataract surgery—a practice prohibited by Canadian law. Alberta refused to stop Gimble from charging the extra fee, and the federal government responded by cutting its transfer payments to the province. The dispute was recently resolved when the Alberta government agreed to foot the \$1,000 per patient fee itself.

Then there are the odd arrangements that have emerged from the proximity of Canada's socialized health care to America's private system. In Alberta, a private group of doctors, nurses and investors calling itself the "Hotel de Health" is lobbying to use provincial hospital beds left empty by the cutbacks to establish a private service offering medical care to wealthy Americans.

In Toronto, the King's Health Center, a private clinic

affiliated with the Mayo Clinic in the United States, is negotiating with U.S. insurance companies and HMOs to provide medical care to American patients at a fraction of U.S. costs. Canadians are prohibited from paying the seven-month-old clinic for medically necessary surgery, but King's says it has plans to refer paying Canadians tired of waiting lists to the Mayo Clinic.

"It's like a dog chasing its tail," says Cornelius of the Ontario Nurses Association. "There are many people in the U.S. who want the finer aspects of the Canadian system while some in Canada are chasing an American-style system."

In many ways, the American health care system has always functioned as a second tier to the Canadian system, allowing wealthy Canadians to jump waiting lines and take advantage of American health services.

As anxiety about the quality of Canadian care grows, American health care providers are making new inroads into the lucrative Canadian market. In Toronto, a former stock broker has a flourishing business selling American hospital procedures like heart and hip operations to affluent Canadian patients who are fed up with waiting lists. Last January, the University of Virginia Medical Center bought an ad in the *Globe and Mail* inviting the paper's well-heeled readers to travel south for hip and knee replacement.

Supporters of Medicare argue that Canada's health care woes could be resolved by a well-organized and adequately funded reform of the existing system. Transferring money to prevention and community care would both reduce Canadians' need for costly hospital care and improve overall health.

"You can never build a big enough hospital at the bottom of the cliff," says health policy analyst Rachlis. "It's much more prudent to put a fence around the top."

Along with transferring funds to community-based care, Medicare supporters say that health care costs could be controlled by paying doctors a flat salary rather than fees for each service they perform. This would reduce the incentive to prescribe unnecessary treatments. Many advocates of public health care also favor giving a bigger role to other health care providers, such as nurses and midwives. Since they require less training than doctors, health care costs would decline.

Meanwhile, in Toronto, the expectant Lydia Batelaan continues to wait for an obstetrician. Under the circumstances, she's remarkably unperturbed. That's because she's getting excellent prenatal care from a nurse and general practitioner team at her local community health clinic.

"I feel confident in their hands," says Batelaan. "They have time to spend with patients and you don't get that feeling of being rushed in and rushed out like you do in a lot of specialists' offices."

Ironically, if Batelaan is a symbol for the trouble facing Canada's health care system, the form of community care that she has sought also represents the happy future that many wish for Medicare.

Nicole Nolan is a freelance writer based in Toronto.

Passing the buck

By Charles P. Sohner

The era of big government may be over, as President Clinton repeatedly proclaimed during his recent re-election campaign—and as his Republican rivals would be pleased to guarantee. Yet so far, the attack on federal bureaucracies has chiefly meant a devolution of power from Washington to state and local governments. The transfer of substantial control over welfare programs to the states—which George Will called “the most important such devolution of federal power since the end of Reconstruction”—exemplifies this shift.

Relentless attacks on big government and federal bureaucrats, who have been incongruously denounced as both tyrannical and incompetent, perpetuate an American tradition that venerates the inherent superiority of grass-roots politics. This barrage of propaganda has diverted public attention from the weaknesses of the state and local governments on which conservatives wish to heap more responsibility.

There are time-tested arguments against a headlong rush to transfer federal power to the states. In the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison warned that governments of relatively small areas are more easily dominated by a single faction or interest group than are national governments. The protracted power of the du Ponts in Delaware, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company in Montana and the Mormons in Utah seems to confirm Madison's thesis.

Devolution devotees also ignore the simple precept that state and local officials should be accountable to the electorate. At a minimum, that means that their constituents

know who they are. Yet polls show, for example, that while 36 percent of the public can name their U.S. representative, only 12 percent can identify their state legislator.

In part, this epidemic of civic ignorance can be explained by the demands and diversions of modern life, but the media also bear a huge responsibility. Chain ownership of newspapers, widespread syndication of columnists and the precipitous decline in the number of daily newspapers and newspaper readers have reduced the capacity and inclination of the print media to cover politics below the national level. The broadcast media do no better. TV channels that span city and even state boundaries have little incentive to cover local politics. Consequently, a multitude of state and local officials function—or fail to function—in near anonymity.

Pervasive public ignorance is reflected in low voter participation in state and local elections. In the 1994 gubernatorial primary in

California, for example, only 16.4 percent of the electorate bothered to vote, the lowest turnout of the century. “Not coincidentally,” Harold Meyerson commented in the *L.A. Weekly*, “it was also the most lightly covered primary by television news ... since the advent of television.” Gubernatorial elections generally draw about 15 percent fewer voters to the polls than presidential ones, and the number of people who vote in local races is even smaller. Normally, voting

drops off by about 25 percent from the top of the ballot to lesser offices at the bottom. In city and school board elections, often held separately, a turnout of around 20 percent is common.

The size of the turnout would not affect the results if the voters were representative of the population as a whole. But this is hardly the case. In 1994's midterm elections, people with household incomes under \$30,000 a year, including most welfare recipients, were 24 percent less likely to vote than the affluent, African-Americans were 23 percent less likely to vote than whites,

and women were 8 percent less likely to vote than men. Given their lower rate of participation, these relatively liberal groups have less influence in state and local races than in national elections—another reason for welfare rights advocates to prepare for the worst as devolution of federal power proceeds.

States score no better on efficiency than on accountability. Their inefficiency is, in part, due to the plural executive structure of state and local governments. This obscures lines of

State and local governments are being asked to assume more responsibility. But are they up to the task?

responsibility and creates excessively long ballots that make it hard for citizens to hold state officials responsible for their actions. In 32 states, voters elect five or more executive officials in addition to the governor. Few voters can name such obscure executives as the state treasurer, auditor or agricultural commissioner. The result is an unaccountable executive branch often impervious to effective coordination.

State legislatures, too, struggle with onerous handicaps. In most states, the constitutions are too long, averaging four times the length of the U.S. Constitution, and are burdened with sometimes minute policy matters that would be better left to legislative action. In Kentucky, for example, provisions regulating grain elevators and subsurface mineral rights can be changed only through the cumbersome process of constitutional amendment.

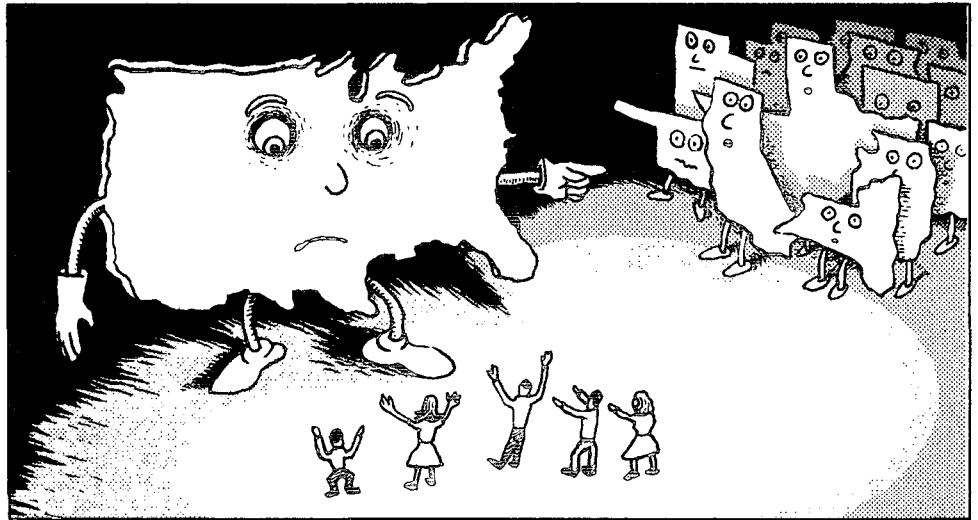
In addition, limits on legislative sessions provide too little time for the deliberation essential to resolve increasingly complex issues. Seven state legislatures convene only every other year, while 37 others meet for a constitutionally limited number of days each year, often fewer than 60. These state legislatures, with their hands already full, are hardly in a position to assume more power and responsibility.

The rabbit-like proliferation of local governments, created by states as their agents, is responsible for many of their ills. By 1992, there were more than 86,000 local government jurisdictions, with at least a thousand in the Chicago area alone. In Allegheny County, Penn., where Pittsburgh is located, there are 84 municipalities, dozens of school districts, a sanitary authority, a port authority, a soil and water conservation district and numerous townships. The plethora of local elected officials in such entities—assessors, sheriffs, city attorneys, constables and jailers, school boards, city council members, county commissioners and supervisors, county recorders and court clerks, judges and prosecuting attorneys—makes it extremely difficult to hold government responsible for its actions. Most of these local governments, many of whose boundaries overlap, can levy taxes, but revenues usually cannot be transferred from one to another, regardless of disparities in wealth or need. Intelligent budgeting is thereby rendered almost impossible.

The number of local governments frequently bears little relationship to the size of the states that spawn them. Georgia, for example, ranks second in the number of counties but 10th in population and 21st in land area. Nor is there much congruity between population clusters and state or local boundaries. New York's metropolitan area sprawls into three states, as do those of Chicago and Cincinnati, while the Philadelphia metropolitan area spreads into four,

enveloping dozens of counties, townships and special districts. This multiplicity of jurisdictions is a formidable barrier to effective action to resolve such problems as traffic, pollution and zoning.

Administrative efficiency is also diminished by the growing population differentials among the states. In 1790, Virginia, then the largest state, had only 12 times as many residents as Delaware, the smallest. In 1990, California was 65 times more populous than Wyoming. Yet both states have the full panoply of departments administering prisons, social services, education and a host of other programs. Some of



these agencies may be too large, others too small, but they are certainly not all the optimal size for maximum economy or performance. State boundaries, in fact, are relics of historical development. The six New England states, for example, are colonial artifacts. There are 19 states that exceed New England's combined area and three that exceed its total population. Nevertheless, these six states operate separate, wastefully duplicative departments in every area of government activity.

States are handicapped, finally, by a mad scramble to lure jobs away from one another through tax concessions and other corporate subsidies that deplete their treasuries and cripple public services. Since such strategies have done little to reduce the vast differences in state wealth, increasing reliance on state funding for education, family assistance and other programs will exacerbate the substantial inequalities that already exist.

While the federal government is ripe for reform, shifting responsibilities to the states is an almost certain recipe for disaster. We need to recognize the woeful disparity between the efficient, responsible and democratic image of state and local governments and the reality of the severe defects that riddle so many. Otherwise, devolution of federal power can only mean a step backward for American democracy. ◀

Before retirement, Charles P. Sohner taught political science and labor studies at El Camino College in southern California and the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Ky.

I N T H E A R T S

The Flynt follies

**The People vs.
Larry Flynt
confuses forays
into the
sexually outré
with political
enlightenment.**

By Linda DeLibero

If you like your cultural issues reduced to absurdities and clichés, you should find *The People vs. Larry Flynt* just to your taste. The film casts the battle over First Amendment rights as a parable of a plucky, hard-scrabble country boy fighting the forces of darkness. In this case, our all-American hero is porn king and *Hustler* founder Larry Flynt and the evil ones are the sanctionious prigs of the Christian Right. If this scenario seems likely to ring bells at both ends of the political spectrum, that's because it was designed to do precisely that. Riding roughshod over complicated social debates, Milos Forman's *The People vs. Larry Flynt* is old-fashioned, homespun propaganda, as straightforward in its own way as anything Father Coughlin or Huey Long churned out for Depression-era America. Like the bombast of those proto-fascist

populists, *Flynt*—which charts the pornographer's numerous battles with censorship—depends heavily on manipulation of fact, on a willingness to reduce the thorniest of issues to stark simplicity, and on a distinctly anti-democratic desire to see the strong and comely lord it over the weak and toad-like.

In a flagrantly dishonest piece of casting, the porcine Flynt (who's on display in the movie as a hostile judge) is played by the boyishly handsome Woody Harrelson. Throughout the movie, the inconvenient realities of Flynt's life (his four ex-wives, his daughter's accusations of sexual molestation, his magazine's graphic misogyny and racism) are air-brushed away. It's possible to accept Flynt and his followers as champions of free speech only if the game is thoroughly rigged. By positing a world where only the contemptible likes of Jerry Falwell and Charles Keating have a problem with unlimited free speech, the film would have us dismiss anyone who honestly argues the limits of First Amendment rights as small-minded and prudish. Given these wholesale deceptions, and a view of politics that can only be described as cartoonish, why is Forman's movie being hailed by half the pundits and film critics in America (specifically, the half that resides somewhere to the left of the "Vital Center") as a triumphant blow for freedom—and a critical masterpiece to boot?

A partial answer is that *Flynt* epitomizes a peculiar tendency among some left and liberal thinkers to confuse forays into the sexually outré with political enlightenment. If this sounds like a leftover sentiment from the '60s, it is. It's also familiar territory for Forman, who, you may recall, directed the film version of *Hair*. *Flynt* bears an even closer resemblance to an earlier Forman work, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Like *Flynt*, *Cuckoo's Nest* features an attractive man of the soil poised against the uptight authoritarianism of conventional society—as represented, of course, by a woman, the castrating virago Nurse Ratched (and a horde of black orderlies). And like Harrelson's Larry Flynt, Jack Nicholson's macho renegade Randolph McMurphy coerces his fellow inmates (akin to Flynt's coterie of hangers-on) to accept his version of freedom, which turns out to be a rather paltry affair: an excess of booze and a roll in the hay with some nubile chicks. Apart from the charm and smooth talk, it's hard to see why McMurphy's brand of manipulation is any less authoritarian than Nurse Ratched's, but '70s audiences ate the movie up as a celebration of unbridled liberation—as if in the aftermath of the '60s, no one could think of a better cause to fight for than the pursuit of happiness as pictured in a schoolboy's wet dream.

Likewise, *Flynt* unmistakably links the pornographer's courtroom battles over free speech to a lifestyle that includes

plenty of available girls, drugs and rock-and-roll. The connection between political "commitment" (in reality, of course, Larry Flynt was more interested in protecting his bottom line than our freedom) and the outer bounds of sexual practice falls in line with a certain strain of left thinking that identifies porn as the last worthy cause. In fact, for some critics, the film's smut quotient is insufficient. Laura Kipnis, in the eternally porn-friendly *Village Voice*, writes that *Flynt* errs by being too mild-mannered in its depiction of sex. *Hustler* and its founder, according to Kipnis, were in the business of "transgressing" boundaries and "contesting" state power, revolutionary activities that the film apparently lost sight of in its obeisance to the virtues of the Constitution. Linking Larry Flynt's working-class origins with *Hustler*'s raunch, Kipnis sees both as an "outrage to bourgeois sensibilities." Class snobbery, the argument goes, is the blight that prevents the unenlightened middle-brow from appreciating *Hustler*'s "transgressions." So much for people—whether working or middle class—who might object to pornography simply because they're trying to raise their children in a reasonably sane environment.

While Kipnis' equation of sexual perversity with political action is, shall we say, perverse, she's right about one thing. The sex in *Flynt*, which *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich finds so potentially shocking, is, at most, slightly wilder than what you'd see on any given afternoon of network soaps. There's nothing in the film that even comes close to depicting the grosser aspects of *Hustler*; if there were, no mogul in Hollywood would touch this material (so much for the triumph of free speech), and no audience (except, maybe, for Kipnis) would buy the idea of Flynt as a patriotic hero. But Rich and Kipnis—along with Forman and the numerous critics who have praised the film—do share common ground in their elevation of Flynt to the status of populist icon. It's the hip thing to do.

And hip, indeed, is *Flynt*, with its polyester 'n' plaid vision of the '70s—the decade of choice for retro-couture buffs—and grunge-queen Courtney Love on board as Flynt's stripper/junkie wife, Althea Leasure. All that hipness

nearly disguises the film's deeply retrograde message: It takes a man like Harrelson's Flynt to lead the lumpen backwoods masses to enlightenment.

Milos Forman, a survivor of both Nazism and Communism, has said that he was attracted to Flynt's story because of his personal experience with dictatorial regimes, where



Woody Harrelson in Milos Forman's
The People vs. Larry Flynt.

the pornographers are the first to suffer persecution. That may be so, but there's another way of approaching the issue—one that looks squarely at the pornography in question and considers what it has in common with the totalitarian's business of turning human beings into cattle. The movie's rather tame take on kinky sex (Althea's pink panties remain in place throughout the film) has effectively obscured the real contents of *Hustler*'s pages. As Hanna Rosin (the only journalist writing about *Flynt* who seems to have actually looked at a copy of the magazine) recently noted in *The New Republic*, Larry Flynt's brand of sexual "liberation" equates copulation with bestiality: a vision of sex as nasty, brutish and short. If this is, as Laura Kipnis claims, transgressive, we might ponder all the horrors that also fall under that rubric. To endorse the kind of dehumanizing pornography *Hustler* represents on the grounds that it has been targeted by totalitarian censors is to blindly gloss over the more chilling connection between the purveyors of porn and the purveyors of fascism. Both envision a world in which there are no limits on what can be done to the human body. ▲

IN PRINT

The heresy of ecological economics

By John Bellamy Foster

The sudden emergence in the late 20th century of a global ecological crisis has opened up one of the deepest chasms in the history of economic thought. On one side of this chasm, orthodox economists, only dimly aware of the ecological crisis, remain immersed in what John Kenneth Galbraith has called "the culture of contentment." For the great bulk of the economics profession, the solution to global environmental problems lies in a freer self-regulating market system coupled with higher rates of economic growth (which would make it easier to pay for the costs of environmental cleanup). On the other side of the chasm, a small but increasingly influential minority of heretical economists—sometimes known as "ecological economists"—insist that radical changes, such as an end to economic growth, the dematerialization of the economy, and the internalization within the economy of all environmental costs are required if the economy is to be ecologically sustainable.

Yet notwithstanding the deep gulf separating their views, both orthodox economists and most ecological economists agree that market-driven solutions are the answer to environmental problems; the viability of modern capitalism as such remains unquestioned. Such works as Herman Daly's *Beyond Growth*, Peter May and Ronaldo Serôa da Motta's *Pricing the Planet*, and Thomas Powers' *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies*, three of the best recent examples of ecological economics, are analogous to a religious heresy that contests the sacraments but not the deity of a given religious faith.

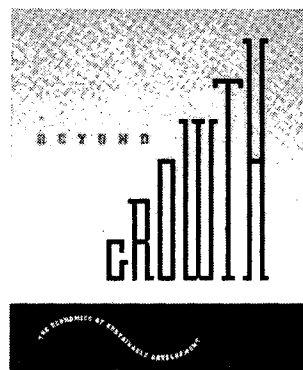
That ecological economics is heretical cannot be denied. At a recent conference organized by the Smithsonian Institution on the limits to economic growth, Daly, a former economist at the World Bank, confronted Lawrence Summers, formerly the bank's chief economist and today an assistant treasury secretary in the Clinton administration. Daly, as he recounts it in his book, asked Summers "if he felt that the question of the size of the economic subsystem relative to the total ecosystem was an important one, and whether he

thought economists should be asking the question, What is the optimal scale of the macroeconomy relative to the environment? Summers' reply was immediate and definite: 'That's not the right way to look at it.' "

Summers' cursory response calls to mind ecological economist Kenneth Boulding's remark that, "Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist." If world industry were to grow at 3 percent a year (the rate at which it expanded between 1970 and 1990), it would double in size every 25 years, grow 16-fold every century, and grow by 250 times every two centuries. Insofar as this involves a 250-fold increase in material production—or even anything close to it—it is clearly unsustainable.

For Daly, this exchange suggests that he and Summers have two fundamentally different "preanalytic visions" with regard to the economy. The preanalytic vision of most orthodox economists—following in the tradition of a long line of thought going back at least as far as the classical economist David Ricardo, who declared that nature was "indestructible" and "inexhaustible"—does not see the economy as a subsystem of the biosphere as a whole. Rather, the economy is simply suspended in a kind of infinite space.

Daly's new book develops an opposing vision, one concerned with the question that Summers refused to address: the optimal scale of the economy, given the limits of the biosphere. According to Daly, this optimal scale has already been reached. Any further growth of the world economy (in the sense of expansion of physical output) will only contribute to the worsening of ecological conditions and human welfare. As a solution, Daly prescribes a shift to a steady-state economy along the lines proposed in the 19th century by John Stuart Mill, which he defines as zero growth of physical output of resources and energy. This does not, he contends, preclude unlimited human, social and economic development, any more than the inherent limits of the biosphere have



HERMAN E. DALY

Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development

By Herman Daly
Beacon Press
253 pp., \$27.50

Pricing the Planet: Economic Analysis for Sustainable Development

Edited by Peter H. May and Ronaldo Serôa da Motta
Columbia University Press
220 pp., \$36.00

Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place

By Thomas Michael Power
Island Press
304 pp., \$29.95

precluded evolutionary development.

Daly's sharpest criticisms are leveled at those who adopt what has become known as the "weak sustainability" hypothesis: that is, the notion that while the economy should promote sustainability, natural capital (e.g., an old-growth forest, a stock of fish, or petroleum reserves) and human-made capital are completely interchangeable. According to this perspective, advocated by thinkers like Julian Simon and Milton Friedman, it does not matter if natural resources are diminished as long as human-made capital increases to an equal or greater extent. Such economic theorists do not see a problem of scale, since economic growth substitutes for any losses in the biosphere.

Against this, ecological economists—those who adopt a "strong sustainability" hypothesis in which human-made capital is simply not substitutable for natural capital—contend that ecosystems and the biosphere as a whole make up the life-support system of the earth, and are characterized by critical thresholds beyond which crises set in. Tropical forests, for example, are home to around half the world's species and are critical in regulating the planet's climate. No conceivable mass of human-made capital could replace them in either of these roles. The razing of such forests—beyond a certain point—thus represents irreversible and catastrophic change. To promote unlimited exponential economic growth is to court full-scale disaster.

Daly is very clear that such issues raise questions about the self-regulating features of the free-market economy. The market, he says, is wonderful at allocating scarce resources where they will be most productive; it is hopeless, however, when it comes to issues of scale (sustainability) or distributive justice. Hence, it is necessary to intervene to create the institutional basis for a steady-state economy and to promote redistribution of wealth, particularly between the rich and poor nations. *Beyond Growth* employs Marx's famous M-C-M' schema (the "general formula of capital") to explain how the system promotes money fetishism. Capitalists' overriding goal is the expansion of money values (M), not the satisfaction of human needs. The production of commodities (C) is simply the means to that end.

In the end, though, Daly is unable or unwilling to address the realities of a capitalist economy. Despite his resignation from the World Bank, he remains part of what he himself calls the "loyal opposition"—a heretic reluctant to challenge the underlying faith (the deity of the capitalist, free-market

economy) or to embrace what is most profane (socialism), limiting his sacrilege to an attack on economic growth. Perhaps most indicative of his position is the fact that while he recognizes that Marx's formula M-C-M' constitutes the form of "capitalist circulation," Daly nonetheless refuses to take the further step of recognizing that this relation is the defining characteristic of capitalist accumulation (what Robert Heilbroner terms "the regime of capital"): Capital, self-expanding value by definition, is inherently expansionary.

From this standpoint, it is impossible to envision a capitalist economy operating on a steady-state basis—a contradiction that Daly ignores.

Given his refusal to address the implications of his own analysis, it should not surprise us that Daly's analysis starts with a mountain and gives rise to a mouse. As a practical solution to problems of sustainable development, the most concrete policy directive that he can come up with—and with which he ends the book—is tradable pollution permits. Yet apart from their unfortunate effect of creating legal rights to pollute, pollution permits are a wholly

inadequate conclusion to Daly's argument. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a policy more narrowly focused on questions of efficiency to the exclusion of questions of scale, since it is geared specifically to ensure that pollution takes place where it is most economically rational—where it would be most expensive to prevent, for example—rather than to control overall levels of pollution. And since the most economically rational sites will often be poor countries—a point famously made by Summers—it is hard to see how permits address issues of distributive justice either.

Unable to develop a logical conclusion to an argument that resolutely avoids the implications of its own logic, Daly turns, as in most of his recent books, to theology. He presents what he calls the "biblical economic principle" rooted in Christian principles and calls for ecological salvation based on a concept of Creation: "To hand back to God the gift of Creation in a degraded state capable of supporting less life, less abundantly, and for a shorter future, is surely a sin." At best, this represents an awkward merger of liberation ecology with liberation theology. At worst, it's a recourse to the city of God as a way of avoiding the real issues of the earthly city. The economic heresy is softened and the unworldliness of Daly's overall philosophy covered up and made less objectionable through the appeal to a higher faith and a heavenly authority.



©1997 TERRY LABAN

Less heretical than Daly's work, Peter May and Ronaldo Serôa da Motta's *Pricing the Planet* (which arose out of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro) is also written within the tradition of ecological rather than orthodox economics. Still, the essays are for the most part concerned with issues not far removed from the mainstream of economic thinking, such as problems of price allocation and internalizing external costs (that is, forcing producers or consumers to pay costs of their activities now borne by society as a whole).

In recent years, numerous books have been published on "costing the earth." The assumption is that the market does not interact sustainably with the environment simply because the latter does not bear the proper price tag. Ingenious ad hoc schemes—such as green taxes, Daly's tradable permits, removing subsidies that promote environmental degradation, the "polluter pays" principle, and so forth—are therefore proposed for converting all of nature into commodity form. *Pricing the Planet* is explicitly concerned with developing "market mechanisms for environmental quality" along these lines.

The idea that sustainable development can be reduced to internalizing environmental costs is an example of what Daly would call "economic imperialism." It tends to avoid the two core issues: whether all such costs can be internalized within the context of a profit-making economy, and how internalization of such costs can take account of the effects of increasing economic scale within a limited biosphere. The difficulty of internalizing all external costs becomes obvious when one considers what it would take to internalize the costs to society and the planet of the automobile-petroleum complex alone. Indeed, as the great ecological economist K. William Kapp once remarked, "Capitalism must be regarded as an economy of unpaid costs." The full internalization of social costs within the structure of the private market is unthinkable.

But most schemes for costing the earth have less to do with the marketplace absorption of the external costs of existing commodities than with commodifying further portions of nature and extending the range of profit-making. In a classic 1960 article which has recently attracted renewed interest, Nobel prize-winning economist Ronald Coase argued that a social cost originating in the market, such as a specific right to generate air pollution, could be treated as a factor of production, much like other rights associated with property. In this way, air pollution could be internalized within the logic of the market, guaranteeing an economically optimal balance between clean air and polluting industries. As environmentalist Wes Jackson has observed, this amounts to "a proposal to sell air." Sustainability within forest economics has traditionally meant eliminating old-growth forest systems as expeditiously as possible, and replacing them with fully managed industrial tree plantations, governed from beginning to end by the logic of the bottom line. Such absorption of nature by the economy has little to do with—and may be diametrically opposed to—

ecological sustainability itself.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that from an ecological standpoint, the most useful essays in the book are not those directly concerned with pricing the planet but rather those, including an essay by Daly himself, that focus on the costs of environmental degradation in places like Mexico and Brazil. While the search for the right pricing mechanisms to make the market sustainable is a largely futile exercise, ascertaining the costs of environmental degradation is much more likely to reflect ecological ways of thinking and to illuminate the real crisis of environment and society. Whatever one's theoretical perspective on how economics should take into account environmental issues, it is clear that actually existing capitalism's lack of concern for these issues is a powerful demonstration of its irrationality and indifference to real human and ecological needs.

If the critique of growth and the need to internalize all environmental costs can be considered two leading heresies of ecological economics, a third, focusing on dematerialization, is to be found in Thomas Michael Power's *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies*. This book might well become the economic bible of local environmental activists engaged in struggles with extractive industries, particularly in the western United States. Power provides an adept and sometimes elegant treatment of local environmental issues. He is among the liberal proponents of post-industrial environmental transition from economies based on extractive industries to more diversified economies geared to services and environmental amenities. In an approach that sometimes sounds like classic dependency theory, Power suggests that local sustainable development should be based on local needs rather than geared to generating exports from the region. He favors service industries over the sectors emphasized in what he calls the "economic base" model, such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing, which are connected to regional exports. Against this dominant model, Power argues that environmental amenities, like clean air and wilderness, attract immigration and tourism to an area and thus promote economic growth. Local communities should not hesitate to "market the landscape." Indeed, he tells us, communities can best promote sustainable development by moving away from the economic base model, and depending instead on the market to provide other areas of economic activity, such as ecotourism. Power calls this a shift "from dis-services to services."

Underlying this argument is the notion that a shift to services is tantamount to a dematerialization of the economy. Addressing the problem of exponential economic growth, Power argues that neither inputs nor outputs to the economy are necessarily material, and that it is possible to decrease material production while increasing quality. At an abstract level, Power's argument is consonant with Daly's concept of qualitative economic development without growth. But Power believes that the current service sector—restaurants, hospitals, computer services and the like—

already represents a shift to the postindustrial, dematerialized economy. For Daly, it is not nearly so simple: "Such half-truths forget that information does not exist apart from physical brains, books, and computers, and further that brains require the support of bodies, books require library buildings, computers run on electricity, etc."

Power encourages local economies to attract individuals with non-employment income, like retirees and the wealthy, as a way of disconnecting local income from material production with all of the environmental costs it entails. Such strategies have worked to create fashionable watering holes in places like Aspen, Colo., and Jackson, Wyo., where marketing the landscape has proven successful. But as a global approach to environmental problems, it is much more limited. Wealthy communities have always been able to maintain a higher quality of life by making other communities bear the economic and social costs. What appears to be ecological from a local standpoint is counter-ecological when viewed in more global terms.

Each of these three works, while valuable, seems to conform to an unwritten rule: Point to the need to move beyond our present unsustainable forms of production, but remain silent on the need to move beyond our present economic and social system. Such ecological economists seek to reconcile the irreconcilables of capitalism and the limits to growth. But in endeavoring to do so, they only manage to undermine their own critical insights. For if capitalism is a system geared above all to economic growth and the growth

of profits in particular, and in no way directly concerned with the promotion of human welfare or the preservation of nature as such, the question of capitalism versus the earth must sooner or later occupy the central place in any ecological economics worthy of the name.

A much more radical approach, transcending mere heresy, would be one that addressed what James O'Connor has called "the second contradiction of capitalism," or the way in which capitalism undermines the material conditions of production (human beings, the external or natural world, and the built environment) in its promotion of accumulation as a law unto itself. From this perspective, there is every reason to believe that capitalism's narrow economic logic is a march of folly, leading only to deeper and deeper economic and ecological problems that reflect a huge unpaid debt to nature. It is in this interface between ecological and economic crisis (and social and environmental justice) that ecological socialism has a crucial role to play. Today's global ecological crisis is not the product of mere technical factors—such as the failure to optimize efficiency, or even scale and equity—but the result of a system whose underlying laws of motion, rooted in institutionalized greed, place it in an antagonistic relation not only with basic human needs but also with the biosphere itself.

John Bellamy Foster is a professor of sociology at the University of Oregon and a member of the editorial board of *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*. His most recent book is *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment* (Monthly Review Press, 1994).

THE BIG PICTURE

Making Peace with the 60s

David Burner

"A thoughtful, almost elegiac, examination of liberalism's moral and ideological collapse over ten famously tumultuous years. . . . The book is lucid, and Burner's tone throughout is as measured and reasonable as the creed whose redemption he seeks. . . . a valuable contribution for those still trying to make sense of the '60s.'—*Kirkus Reviews*

"[*Making Peace with the 60s*] offers a keen-sighted, comprehensive analysis of a fascinating era that produced the Flower Children and Richard Nixon. Readers searching for an admirable explanation of the cross-connections in this mythic decade can find them here."—*Publishers Weekly*

Cloth: \$29.95 ISBN 0-691-02660-2

The Origins of the Urban Crisis

Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit
Thomas J. Sugrue

"This superb study offers a richly detailed account of the rise and fall of twentieth-century Detroit. Sugrue's sophisticated analysis of the interconnections among jobs, housing, and politics provides a devastating critique of the current fashionable 'culture of poverty' thesis. Must reading for . . . everyone concerned about the current urban crisis."—Jacqueline Jones, author of *The Dispossessed: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present*

"Sugrue's incredibly rich, nuanced, multilayered account of the transformation of Detroit provides the historical perspective missing in virtually all accounts of the crisis ravaging today's inner cities."—Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*

Princeton Studies in American Politics: Historical, International, and Comparative Perspectives
Cloth: \$35.00 ISBN 0-691-01101-X Due December

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

AVAILABLE AT FINE BOOKSTORES OR DIRECTLY FROM THE PUBLISHER: 800-777-4726 • WORLD WIDE WEB SITE: [HTTP://PUP.PRINCETON.EDU](http://PUP.PRINCETON.EDU)

SPEED READING

Secrets and lies

By Pat Aufderheide

Inside Out: A Memoir of the Blacklist

by Walter Bernstein

Alfred A. Knopf

293 pp., \$24

The man who wrote *The Front*, the 1976 blacklist comedy starring Woody Allen, now has published the real-life memories on which the movie was based. He also tells what is known in Hollywood as the back story—the significant features of his life leading up to the early Cold War years when paranoids both had and were the real enemies.

Walter Bernstein is a veteran movie and television scriptwriter, the author of screenplays for entertaining classics such as *Fail-Safe* and *The Molly Maguires*, and a television insider from the medium's beginnings to the age of HBO. But entertainment industry gossip doesn't play a big part in *Inside Out: A Memoir of the Blacklist*. Bette Davis, John Garfield, Carlo Ponti, David Susskind and other larger-than-life inhabitants of America's dream factories make their appearances in a highly personal tale about heart, conscience and storytelling.

As Bernstein tells it, he was an all-American com-symp from childhood. Growing up in New York in an Eastern European Jewish immigrant family, he fell in love with movies, Tom Swift, the Dodgers and—during six months in France after high school and later at Dartmouth College—causes supported by communists.

The Spanish Civil War led him, along with other Dartmouth students, to the Young Communist League. He loved *The Communist Manifesto*, but couldn't read *Capital*, and definitely had no intention of distributing the *Daily Worker* to Dartmouth students. "It was hard enough getting students to read the *Daily Dartmouth*," he writes.

Like most of the communist groups Bernstein later met with and joined, his Young Communist League cell seems to have done nothing but talk. In all his meetings, no one ever showed any interest in overthrowing the government or taking violent action. "Our meetings," he writes, "might have been less boring if they had."

Bernstein subsequently stumbled into a remarkable career as an army journalist. He became a Hollywood writer in the last days of the old studio system—"another one of your commie writers from New York," as Harry Cohn unconcernedly noted to writer/director Robert Rossen. (Rossen, Bernstein says, was outraged when he didn't make the list of the blacklisted Hollywood Ten. Later, after forcing his own son to sever relations with a friend whose father had named names, Rossen turned informer.) Bernstein wrote speeches for left-wing presidential candidate Henry Wallace and watched Harry Truman steal his best lines.

For eight years beginning in 1950, Bernstein himself was blacklisted. He returned to New York and the crazy first days of television. An idealistic and talented underground culture of blacklisted writers was then emerging. Friendship was critical to survival, as was luck, which often amounted to the kindness of strangers. Throughout his undercover television career, Bernstein retained his feature journalist's

fascination with human idiosyncrasy and his ability to understand without judging. Those traits are generously on display in *Inside Out*, whether Bernstein's recounting the neuroses of the "fronts" who lent their bylines to his work, the tics of his FBI shadows, or the waffling of television and movie executives.

Bernstein also describes, without attempting to justify, his own frailties and failures of judgment. He saw the Communist Party as one expression of widespread and admirable anti-fascism, fueled by the dream of true internationalism. That dream "insulated" him, he says, from brutal realities he ought to have known about. Bernstein read reports of the Stalinist atrocities at the time, but rationalized them.

They were "my first example of what horror can be perpetrated in the name of security and how easy then to apologize for it," he writes. "The example was lost on me."

Bernstein tells his tale with wry humor and without pretension. Its quiet honesty resists the self-righteousness that still plagues accounts of the blacklist period. The memoir would make a terrible movie—it has too many gray areas. But it is a moving and thought-provoking contribution to our understanding not only of the blacklist, but of the peculiar history of American opposition politics and of the burdens of moral choice in a democracy. ◀



Walter Bernstein

C L A S S I F I E D S

▷ HELP WANTED

IN THESE TIMES seeks volunteer interns with an interest in progressive politics and independent publishing to do research, proofreading and other editorial tasks. Send résumé and cover letter to Deidre McFadyen, ITT, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

UNION REPRESENTATIVE: Pennsylvania's most progressive central labor council with 22,000 members seeks Director of Operations. Bachelors and three years experience required. Excellent communication skills and computer literacy a must. Bi-lingual a plus. Responsible for general oversight of all Council affairs including: political action, community outreach, staff supervision, members only benefits, public relations, worker education. Salary 26K-33K to start plus medical and car allowance. Send cover letter and résumé: AFL-CIO Search Committee,

400 Washington Street, Suite 1200, Reading PA 19601

MEDIA DIRECTOR: GREENPEACE SEEKS director for DC office to manage department and establish media profile to promote campaigns and goals. Duties as follows: devise strategies for increased media coverage, provide placement leads for story direction, plan news conferences/press briefings, serve as in-house spokesperson, liaise with other divisions, scan media for trends/potential outlets and manage/train staff. Reports to ED. Requires minimum 5 years media management, excellent communication skills and press contacts. Prefer knowledge/interest in environ-

mental issues. Salary commensurate/great benefits. Send résumé w/ cover letter to T. Webb, 1436 U St. NW, Washington, DC 20009 or FAX: 202-462-4507. ATTN:DM. Deadline Jan. 31. GP is an EOE which values a diverse staff.

LABOR UNION POSITION: SEIU Local 73 seeks to fill two staff positions in Chicago and Springfield, Illinois areas. Position requires a minimum of 3 years of trade union experience with experience in negotiations. Wages commensurate with experience. Excellent benefits. Send résumé to: D. Warren, SEIU Local 73, 1165 North Clark Street, Suite 500, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

ORGANIZER: LAW STUDENT ORGANIZING for National Lawyers Guild, National Office, NYC. Commitment to social justice, oral and written communications skills & willingness to travel necessary, law school experience a plus. Half-time, \$13,000/year plus union benefits, BOE, AA/EOE. Send résumé and letter by Jan. 20th to NLG, 126 University Place, 5th Fl., NYC, NY 10003 or fax: (212) 627-2404.

COMMUNITY JOBS: The Employment Newspaper for the Non-Profit Sector. Join over 50,000 job-seekers in reading a unique monthly publication containing more than 200 new job listings (in Environment, Arts, International, Health, Youth, Civil Rights, Housing, Human Services, etc.). Featuring informative articles, book reviews, resource lists, profiles of nonprofit organizations and the people who found them. Contact: Community Jobs, 1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 838, Wash., DC 20036.

▷ PUBLICATIONS

"ON STRIKE" OR RETREAT. Free Marxist leaflet. Write DDEC, PO Box 3744-T, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-3744. DO YOU HAVE spanking fantasies? We do—hundreds—and ours are for sale. Romantic, erotic, disciplinary, wherever the muse wanders. For a 24-page catalogue send \$3.00 to CF Publications, Box 706TT, E. Setauket, NY.

▷ FOREIGN LANGUAGES

SPANISH, CULTURE, TOURS, at

JEWISH CURRENTS

January, 1997 Issue

"Netanyahu Digs His Own Hole" and "Grave Robbers at Work," editorials; "An Idyllic View of the Hasidim," Sid Resnick; "The New York Times and Yiddish," George Jochnowitz; "'Israelism' Introduced for U.S. Jews," Jacob Benjamini.

Single issue: \$3 (USA).
Subscription: \$30 yearly (USA).

JEWISH CURRENTS
Dept. T, Suite 601,
22 E. 17 St., New York, NY 10003.

SEIU POSITIONS AVAILABLE

SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION (SEIU), a progressive, dynamic national labor organization that provides a voice for more than one million workers in the U.S. and Canada seeks individuals to fill the following positions. Excellent salary and generous benefits package. Positions located in Washington, DC unless otherwise indicated. Send résumé with the indicated reference to SEIU, PO Box 34104, Washington, DC 20043:

POLITICAL PROGRAM COORDINATOR: Seeking individual to design and implement union's political program elements. Bachelor's degree in related field; or minimum of six years successful state, municipal or federal political campaign planning or management experience required. Knowledge of political finance issues and laws; and experience in

statewide multiple candidate or multiple issue campaigns preferred. Working knowledge of WordPerfect, Quattro Pro or similar spreadsheet packages required. Reference: PPC.

EASTERN REGION POLITICAL DIRECTOR: Seeking individual to assist the International Union in implementing its political, voluntary fundraising and legislative programs at the state and local levels in the eastern region. Bachelors Degree in related field; or six years experience in implementing comprehensive political plans and demonstrated knowledge of grassroots political organizing techniques required. Position located on East Coast. Reference: EPD

WESTERN REGION POLITICAL DIRECTOR: Seeking individual to assist the International Union in implementing

its political, voluntary fundraising and legislative programs at the state and local levels in the western region. Bachelors Degree in related field; or six years experience in implementing comprehensive political plans and demonstrated knowledge of grassroots political organizing techniques required. Position located in Los Angeles, CA. Reference: WPD

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR: Seeking individual to direct and plan the International Union's legislative strategy. Bachelor's or Advanced Degree and seven years experience in drafting legislation; and in all aspects of legislative activity, strategic planning, policy analysis and organizational development. Knowledge of state and local legislative processes helpful. Reference: LD

PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WOMEN ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY.

ESCUELA AZTECA. Summer in beautiful Cuernavaca. \$220 two weeks. Intensive grammar all levels. Weekend tours. Minicourses with Ross Gandy, Ph.D. (Mexico: Reform or Revolution?). Live with Mexican family. For brochure: call (52-73)-15-24-69. Address: ESCUELA AZTECA, Apdo. Postal 76-005; 04201 Mexico, D.F.

TAKE A PEOPLE VACATION in beautiful Guatemala. CBA offers one-to-one Spanish instruction tailored to meet your needs. Indigenous owned. Volunteer opportunities arranged. R&B with local family, 5 hrs/day of classes - \$130. Contact CBA, 1432 Elizabeth Street, Lexington, KY 40503, (606) 278-5008.

Socialist

A democratic socialist view of life and politics from the Socialist Party USA.
\$9.00 per year (6 issues).

516 W. 25th St. #404, NY, NY 10001
(212) 691-0776

SPANISH IN GUANAJUATO - TWO weeks - \$255. Instituto Falcon, Jorge Barroso, Mora 158, Guanajuato, Gto 36000, Mexico. Ph./Fax: (473) 2-36-94. <http://www.infonet.com.mx/falcon>.

HEALTH

ABORTING OURSELVES SAFELY! Bibliography of information on Menstrual Extraction, herbal & vitamin abortions, etc. \$5 & SASE to: AUTONOMY, Box 591, Chilmark, MA 02535.

TRAVEL

EXPERIENCE LIFE IN NICARAGUA living with local family, observing agriculture techniques and social cus-

New Political Science

Radical scholarship on today's political issues.
Special price! \$25 for 4 issues

Gvt Dpt., Suffolk Univ.,
Boston, MA 02108
617-573-8126

toms. Modest cost, April 1-12. Contact Promoting Enduring Peace, 112 Beach Ave., Milford, CT 06460. Phone: (203) 878-4769. Limited Space.

LOCAL/GLOBAL

"ALUMINUM ANONYMOUS"—Act locally, act globally to hold nation's breweries to greater accountability. Networking newsletter. Dennis Brezina, PO Box 683, Chesapeake City, MD 21915.

PERSONALS

EROTIC, INTELLIGENT, imaginative conversation—Discreet, personal

Concerned Singles Newsletter links compatible singles who care about peace, social justice, gender equity, racism, and the environment.

Nationwide All ages • Since 1984
FREE SAMPLE: Box 444-IT
Lenox Dale, MA 01242 or (413) 445-6309

GOOD VIBRATIONS
Friendly, informative catalog of sex toys, books & videos, \$4.
1210 Valencia #1T

CHIAPAS
CHALLENGING HISTORY
INDIGENOUS VIEWPOINTS ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTHERN MEXICO
SPECIAL EDITION OF AKWEKON JOURNAL.
SINGLE ISSUE: \$14.00 PPD. ONE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION: \$18.00 (U.S.) CHECK/VISA/MC TO: 300-IT CALDWELL HALL, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, NY 14853

INDONESIA
Reality Tour: May 19 - 31, 1997
Witness national parliamentary elections in Jakarta
Talk to dynamic writers, students and labor activists
GLOBAL EXCHANGE 800-497-1994

and pleasurable. Please inquire (617) 661-3849.

FOR RENT

BLUE RIDGE FOOTHILLS - Charming guest house, idyllic country for ecology minded vacationer(s). \$375/week. POB 455, Sperryville, VA 22740.

CASSETTES

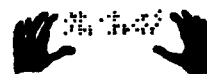
NOAM CHOMSKY "EXPANDING THE Floor of the Cage," latest interviews with David Barsamian. Two tapes, \$24. Visa/MC, (800) 444-1977, Alternative Radio, Box 551, Boulder, CO 80306

MISCELLANEOUS

ABOLISH ZOO PRISONS. No Animals in carnivals, circuses. Contact PO Box 428, Watertown, NY 13601-0428 or (315) 782-1858.

WANTED - HERMAN MILLER catalogs & ephemera and any other modern design/furniture related books. Contact Kit Boyce 773-769-3190

Our Right To Know Braille Press, Inc.



For blind and print-handicapped persons, FII - FREEDOM IDEAS INTERNATIONAL, a quarterly review of minority and independent publications, includes selected articles from IN THESE TIMES. Produced by Our Right to Know Braille Press, Inc., on 4-track 15/16 ips cassette tape. A 4-issue subscription costs \$5.

Our Right to Know Braille Press, Inc.
640 Bayside, Detroit, MI 48217
(313) 842-1804

IN THESE TIMES classified ads work like your own sales force.

Word Rates:

95¢ per word / 1-2 issues
85¢ per word / 3-5 issues
80¢ per word / 6-9 issues
75¢ per word / 10-19 issues
65¢ per word / 20 + issues

Display Inch Rates:

\$30 per inch / 1-2 issues
\$28 per inch / 3-5 issues
\$26 per inch / 6-9 issues
\$24 per inch / 10-19 issues
\$22 per inch / 20 + issues

Classified ads must be prepaid. Send your copy, coupon, and payment to:
IN THESE TIMES, Classified Ads, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ for _____ issue(s).

Please indicate desired heading _____

Advertiser _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Thomas Paine VIDEOCASSETTE

This educational, "very informative," and "fascinating" 40-minute video, written and hosted by Thomas Paine Scholar Carl Shapiro, was telecast via cable TV throughout northern New Jersey in the spring of 1992. In this original, unedited video, the essential meaning of Paine's extraordinary career as revolutionary writer and foremost exponent of democratic principles is recounted in a presentation "sure in its content" and clear in its delivery. A discussion of little-known but significant incidents in Paine's life adds immeasurably to this memorable video.

VHS cassette, \$25.00 ppd. (USA)
INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS, P.O. BOX 102, RIDGEFIELD, NJ 07657

Continued from page 32

Entertainment Weekly, but the original cells continue to clone themselves in his Netizen column. In the column, Katz has argued (and argued and argued) that the Web will revolutionize and reinvigorate journalism. But in arguing that the "ultimate test of an idea here isn't whether the author can out-debate the idea's critics, but whether the idea can take on a life of its own," Katz is writing Web journalists' pink slips. If, as Katz says, amateurs are the Web's de facto and best debaters, then the future promises a new twist on the pomo quip: The author isn't dead, he's just out of a job.

Observing this, many Web workers exhibit the gallows humor of the last crew to abandon the cubicles. We greet the proliferation of URLs and advertising for the Web (as opposed to *on* it) with a mixture of amusement and quiet disgust. We joke about the coming indie revival, when the post-2000 descendants of the fanzines that now triumph the DIY aesthetic of 8-tracks and vinyl will place the Web on the same worn altar.

More telling, perhaps, is the wistful nostalgia evinced in the stories of Luddite exoticism traded after hours by Webzine editors and producers. Upping the ante each round, they reveal the technophobias of friends and significant others:

"My girlfriend doesn't have an e-mail address."

"My boyfriend doesn't have a computer."

"My significant other communicates in guttural hoots and whistles."

Ah, so he's on AOL.

Cynical Web workers speak of the public's credulity and the ease with which the hype ball gathers speed despite the upward slope of the cost-to-profit curve. But perhaps what we're really afraid of is that the hype is deserved. We have a sneaking suspicion that the lack of a breakthrough is not the Web's fault but our own.

No one has yet figured out a viable business model for the Web. Hell, no one has really figured out how to produce the content we're supposed to be selling. For an optimistic few, this lack of a tradition or model just keeps the Web dream alive. They constantly trot out new formulas, hoping to both break and define the boundaries of the medium, like Winchell did for radio. How about a sex talk-show incorporating real audio? A Web version of "Taxicab Confessions"? An "alternative" search engine? Still, all these formulas require a basic ingredient that is getting harder and harder to find: financial backing.

The days of AOL and Prodigy throwing money at a paragraph-long proposal and a screen shot are behind us. No one wants to get into a pissing contest in a pool that's already overwarm. The big boys are getting out of the water but quick, jostling to score half-court seating in the arena known as "push media."

Push media is supposed to be like the Web, except that users have information piped to them from pre-selected sources rather than actively search out sites themselves; like a screensaver, it's activated when a computer is left unattended. Push media is big in the corner offices of the world,

where T1 lines provide the round-the-clock net access that push services like Pointcast need to continuously update your screen with stock prices, sports scores and breaking news.

Some observers have explained the defection of multimedia players like Microsoft and Time-Warner to push media with the suggestion that push media's "broadcast" model is easier for old media types to understand. The people making decisions about which new media projects to fund are fascinated by the idea of a service that takes advantage of a computer's deadtime to broadcast "ambient information." In other words, it's a product designed to appear in exactly the spot where people aren't looking—it appears there *because* they're not looking. But who would invest the future of their company in an elaborate computer service for people who aren't using their computers? People who aren't using their computers: the CEOs and marketing honchos high enough up in a company that their computers function as paperweights, not processors.

Push media is often referred to as "desktop entertainment." So it is, but it's less "CNN for your desktop" than a frivolous desk accessory, like a Sharper Image executive pen-warmer. And at the moment, despite its appealing conceptual similarity to TV, push media technology is vastly more complicated on the client side than today's Web browsers, in a world where most people's VCRs still blink midnight.

More problematic than the technical glitches, however, is that push media is still undefined, without clear roles for producers, providers or advertisers. The Web investors who are leaving the rough but at least approximately charted waters of HTML for the promises of the "active desktop" are fooling themselves. As a colleague of mine observed, it's as if an inept photographer, incapable of setting up a single still shot, went off to try and make *Ishtar*.

The media giants who are calling the plays clearly are no better equipped than you or me to tell the bad ideas for the Web from the good ones, if indeed there are any. The difference is that they can invest big money in their bad ideas, whereas we can only live to regret them. Personally, I'm just hoping to be able to walk away from the game when it's over.

Ana Marie Cox is senior editor at *Suck*, an online magazine.

Help us keep your ideas alive

Consider a bequest to In These Times.

When planning your estate, please include a tax-exempt bequest, trust distribution or other long-term support for the Institute for Public Affairs.

For more information, contact:

James Weinstein, Publisher, In These Times
2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647
312-772-0100, ext. 223



© 1997 TERRY LABAN

Multi-mediocrity

By Ana Marie Cox

It's half-time for the World Wide Web and as the Tofflers lead a third wave around the stadium, the players on the field—husky content providers and HTML-soaked desk jockeys—seem slightly bewildered. In all the pregame hype, someone forgot to tell them what game they would be playing. Is the Web an interactive medium, CB radio with pictures? Or is it a multimedia gold mine, a TV that takes a charge card? Two media research firms, Jupiter Communications and Forrester, have estimated that by end of the century, advertisers will spend almost \$5 billion annually on the Web. So how come no one seems to be scoring?

So far, the only people making money on the Web are the computer industry companies building its backbone and the lucky few who sold out their start-up ventures early and often, before Wall Street got wise to the Great IPO Swindle of early '96. Despite the rosy numbers predicted by Jupiter and Forrester, Web publishers today cover less than 20 percent of their costs through advertising. Recent layoffs at Wired Ventures and Netguide and managerial shakeups at Prodigy and Time-Warner's Pathfinder prove that if the Web is a contest, the tension doesn't lie in any manufactured rivalry—not Netscape versus Microsoft, CNET versus Hotwired, *Slate* versus *Salon*, or even digital versus print.

The cliff-hanger question about the Web game isn't what's going on on the field at all, but whether or not the suits are going to pull the plug before the fourth quarter.

The prodding of Lotus pitchman Denis Leary to "use the Internet for something useful, like running a business ... just raw, naked, in-your-face capitalism" seems strangely beside the point. While rawness and nakedness abound, the Web has yet to show any signs of success at "running a business," let alone providing "something useful."

Newcomers lured to the infotainment highway soon discover that most of the roadside attractions are run-down and rickety. There are still more family-pet homepages than reliable magazine archives; the blinking tags and off-the-rack, tiled backgrounds still turn what might be useful prose into glaucoma-inducing speed bumps. Corporate sites promise (and generally deliver) detailed information on Olestra and prescription herpes ointment. There are several versions of the "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" game.

If nothing else, the growth of Web hype has created a pundit vacuum, into which has stepped part-time mystery writer and full-time e-mail correspondent Jon Katz, upon whom the sobriquet "*Wired's* media critic" has attached itself like a growth. Katz's particular strain of media melanoma has spread as far as the *Wall Street Journal* and

Continued on page 31